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Bullying in the Library Workplace

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ABSTRACT

The primary purposes of the study were to investigate how often bullying occurs in libraries and whether bullying policies exist in libraries. The first survey questionnaire was sent to library personnel in the six New England states through statewide email distribution lists. Altogether 571 library staff members completed the survey. The second survey questionnaire was sent to large public and academic libraries in New England to see if they have anti-bullying policies in the workplace. The results of the study clearly showed there were significant reports of workplace bullying in all kinds of libraries. Nonetheless, not many libraries have policies that deal with this workplace challenge.

INTRODUCTION

Bullying in the workplace is becoming an increasingly common phenomenon in many work environments, including libraries.¹ According to an article in ALA's Library Worklife, "up to 44 percent of U.S. workers report that they are or have been bullied at work and even greater numbers of workers have reported witnessing bullying in the workplace."² There are many definitions of workplace bullying currently in use around the world in investigating this serious workplace issue.³ Workplace bullying behavior may be defined as action "that threatens, intimidates, humiliates, or isolates people at work or undermines their reputation or job performance."⁴ This behavior can be directed at an individual by co-workers or supervisors in the work environment. It occurs without regard to gender and can include verbal and emo-

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tional abuse that targets an individual.

Workplace bullying involves situations in which one or more individuals, over a period of time, find themselves on the receiving end of persistent negative actions from one or several other persons, where the target has difficulty defending himself or herself against such actions and a hostile work environment is created.⁵ Workplace bullying not only affects an employee's work performance but can cause long standing emotional and physical issues for the employee. These issues can include "post traumatic stress disorder, lack of self-esteem, absenteeism, sleep disorders and family tension and stress."⁶ Bullying in the workplace deters the formation of a healthy, productive work environment. It is also shown that "workplace stress-related absenteeism costs US employers more than \$300 billion annually."⁷

LITERATURE REVIEW

Workplace bullying can have serious and negative consequences for employees and for organizations. Over the last several decades, numerous research studies have been done about workplace bullying. Many researchers have investigated the antecedents of workplace bullying in an attempt to understand what are the major attributes that can constrain or enhance the incidence and impacts of workplace bullying. A significant portion of the workplace bullying research has examined individual factors such as personality traits of the target or the bully^{8, 9, 10} and organizational factors such as leadership and the organizational climate.^{11, 12, 13} Many other research studies have also emphasized that bullying is a very complex phenomenon including many individual factors and group related factors.^{14, 15, 16}

Other research studies have explored the association between workplace bullying and health problems. Workplace bullying has been found to be associated with sleep disorders,^{17, 18} absence due to sickness,^{19, 20} mental health outcomes, such as job-induced stress, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder,^{21, 22, 23, 24, 25} and an eventual inability to work.^{26, 27} Specific documented work-related consequences of bullying have included decreased job satisfaction, reduced commitment, and an intention to abandon the job.^{28, 29} Furthermore, workplace bullying can result in suicide.³⁰

There is also mounting research evidence that workplace bullying has serious detrimental effects not only for those bul-

lied but also for organizations, workplace colleagues^{31, 32, 33} and family members who are liable to experience much stress from living with a family member who has been bullied.^{34, 35, 36} For organizations, bullying can result in lowered morale,

reduced productivity, reduced loyalty, and increased staff turnover.^{37, 38, 39} The financial effects to a workplace environment that tolerates bullying have also been documented in the research.

First there are the economic challenges for the targets. For instance, one research study has found "41% of bullied women and 36% of bullied men quit their jobs and 18% were not working or underemployed."⁴⁰ Besides the personal consequences to a bullied worker, bullying can cost an organization in many direct and indirect ways such as through decreased staff productivity, increased absenteeism, increased medical costs, increased turnover and the costs associated with staff replacement. Studies have estimated the cost of bullying to organizations to be \$300 billion per year.^{41, 42} Some other studies have also suggested that the cost of bullying to society is in the range of 1.4 - 2.0 percent of GDP.^{43, 44}

Workplace bullying is widespread in both the public and private sectors⁴⁵ and it is increasing in the United States and worldwide.⁴⁶ Research by the United Nations-sponsored International Labor Office has reported "professions that were once regarded as sheltered from bullying and mobbing (e.g., teaching, social services, library services, and health care) are now experiencing increasing acts of such abusiveness..."⁴⁷ It "takes place in schools, universities and libraries at twice the rate of workplaces in general."⁴⁸ However, despite an increase in bullying in library workplaces over the last decade, little research has been done about bullying in libraries. A very limited number of studies in library literature deal with bullying in libraries and most of those are merely descriptive, brief, and some are didactic.^{49, 50, 51, 52} With regard to bullying in library workplaces, thus far no comprehensive empirical research has been done.

This is probably because workplace bullying is difficult to examine, and there is no consensus regarding its definition. The primary purposes of this study were to investigate how often bullying occurs in libraries and whether bullying policies exist in libraries.

METHODOLOGY

In order to explore how often bullying oc-

curs in libraries and whether anti-bullying library policies have been implemented, two different sets of questionnaire surveys were developed respectively. In developing the surveys, the researchers included both multiple choice questions that could be analyzed quantitatively and open-ended questions that allowed respondents to articulate and elaborate their answers more freely. [SurveyMonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2Y88H9W) was used to host the anonymous online surveys.

The first questionnaire survey (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2Y88H9W>), which was designed to find out how often library personnel report bullying behavior, included questions regarding the type of library worked in and the length of service, demographic questions such as age and gender, and specific questions about workplace bullying. Whether the bullying was current or in the past, what type of library it occurred in and whether the person doing the bullying was a co-worker or supervisor were also among the questions that were asked. A cover letter including an online survey link was sent to library personnel on email distribution lists (e.g., CSL-CONNTECH@LIST.CT.GOV in Connecticut and vibraries@list.uvm.edu in Vermont) maintained by state library organizations in the six states that comprise the region of New England: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

The email distribution lists that the first survey was sent to reach over 8,000 subscribers that work in library settings. This survey reached library personnel at all levels of library service from administrative to library support services, so to reflect as wide a range of library population as possible.

The second questionnaire survey (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/29M7P3P>) was sent to large public and academic libraries in New England to see if they have policies regarding bullying in the workplace. Because small libraries are unlikely to have policies regarding bullying in the workplace, it was decided to survey only large public libraries and academic libraries in New England. To create a sample of large public libraries in New England, only the top ten percent of public libraries--based on the number of volumes held--in each New England state were included in the sample. For a sampling frame, for instance, the researchers used online resources such as "Public Library Data" by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, available at <http://mblc.state.ma.us/advisory/statistics/public/>.

Altogether, 122 large public libraries were sampled. To generate a sampling frame of large academic libraries in New England, the researchers used the College Navigator database that is available at <http://nces.ed.gov/collgenavigator/>. Only the top 30 percent of academic libraries--based on the number of volumes held--in each New England state were included in the sample.

Altogether, 69 large academic libraries were sampled for the second survey. The second survey asked if anti-bullying policies were in place and whether these policies originated at the library level or within a larger organization. A cover letter, including an online survey link, was emailed to the directors of the sample of 191 large public and academic libraries.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the frequency distribution of the participants in the first questionnaire survey by their library type. Altogether 571 library personnel in the six New England states participated in the first survey. The vast majority (74.3%) of the participants that responded to the first survey were public library personnel, with the second largest group (15.8%) to respond working in academic libraries.

The results of the first survey clearly show that many library personnel are experiencing workplace bullying in libraries. Nearly 46 percent of the participants reported that they have been bullied (**see Table 2**). In the comments portion of the survey, others that had not experienced bullying directly, stated that they have witnessed bullying incidents in their libraries. For instance, one respondent commented about it as follows.

I have seen pervasive bullying throughout all libraries (public and academic) that I have worked at. Normally by co-workers and the bullies are longstanding women employees, both librarians and support staff.

Table 1. Library Type Respondents Worked in

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Public	424	74.3
Academic	90	15.8
School	36	6.3
Special	21	3.7
Total	571	100.0

Table 2. Experience with Workplace Bullying

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	259	45.7
No	308	54.3
Total	567	100.0

If you ever are able to expand your research it would be good to include the effects on the other employees, who end up being bystanders, whistle blowers, etc. and are also affected by the negative toxic atmosphere that the bullying behavior creates.

Whether those that experienced bullying were more apt to complete the survey is a consideration, but the percentage of those who report workplace bullying is mainly in accordance with findings from previous research studies in other workplace environments.^{53, 54, 55}

Table 3 summarizes the experience with workplace bullying by the library type of the respondents. The results clearly demonstrate that workplace bullying occurs in all types of libraries. To determine whether the differences of bullying experience by the library type were significant, the chi-square test was used. A chi-square analysis, $c^2 (3, N = 567) = 12.092, p = .007$, indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in experience with workplace bullying by the library type. Academic and special library personnel reported experience with workplace bullying significantly more often than public and school library personnel did (**see Table 3**). It has to be noted here, however, that the sample size of the special library group was relatively very small. Therefore, the significant finding of the study should be interpreted with caution. A few respondents' additional comments below further supported these findings.

The Library where I experienced the bullying was a large academic library, and the phenomenon was endemic. It was part of the culture. I could have checked both co-worker and supervisor. Another co-worker described the atmosphere as "toxic." I am now in a small town library and am very happy.

Have been through two academic libraries with excessive sarcasm, screaming, shunning, etc. It needs to change. Left library work and I didn't experience any bullying.

Table 4 shows the frequency distribution of bullies' positions by their gender. On average, about 59 percent of the bullies were their supervisors while nearly 41 percent of the bullies were their co-workers. This finding further supports previous studies reporting that bosses are the majority of bullies.⁵⁶ A chi-square test, $c^2 (1, N = 250) = 8.489, p = .004$, between the two variables (bully's position and gender) revealed that significantly more male library personnel bullied people (79.1%) whom they are supervising more than they bullied their co-workers (20.9%). On the other hand, female library personnel bullied people (55.1%) whom they are supervising only about 10 percent more than they bullied their co-workers (44.9%).

However, several respondents in our surveys noted that there was not a category for those bullied by people that they supervised. This form of bullying is referred to as "upwards bullying."⁵⁷ Although cases of upwards bullying have been reported rarely in the literature, some previous research studies reported that managers can also be the target of workplace bullying from their staff. For instance, two of the survey respondents commented about upwards bullying as follows.

The bullying came from some of my staff and their friends in the community. They didn't like some of the decisions I was making and harassed me over several months in the workplace, via email, regular mail, in person confrontations, at meetings and in public

Table 3. Experience with Workplace Bullying by Library Type

Library Type	Experience with Workplace Bullying		Total
	Yes	No	
Public	181 (69.9%)	240 (77.9%)	421 (74.3%)
	52 (20.1%)	38 (12.3%)	90 (15.9%)
	12 (4.6%)	23 (7.5%)	35 (6.1%)
	14 (5.4%)	7 (2.3%)	21 (3.7%)
Total	259 (100.0%)	308 (100.0%)	567 (100.0%)

Table 4. Bully's Position by Bully's Gender

		Bully's Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Bully's Position	Supervisor	34 (79.1%)	114 (55.1%)	148 (59.2%)
	Co-Worker	9 (20.9%)	93 (44.9%)	102 (40.8%)
Total		43 (100.0%)	207 (100.0%)	250 (100.0%)

Table 5. Experience with Workplace Bullying by Respondent's Age

Respondent's Age	Experience with Workplace Bullying		Total
	Yes	No	
18-24	1 (0.4%)	3 (1.0%)	4 (0.7%)
25-34	39 (15.1%)	68 (22.2%)	107 (18.9%)
35-44	49 (19.0%)	45 (14.7%)	94 (16.7%)
45-54	70 (27.1%)	59 (19.2%)	129 (22.8%)
55-64	91 (35.3%)	111 (36.2%)	202 (35.8%)
65 & Older	8 (3.1%)	21 (6.9%)	29 (5.1%)
Total	258 (100.0%)	307 (100.0%)	565 (100.0%)

places where we might meet. There were constant and continuous angry confrontations over the course of several months along with political maneuvering. I looked for, and found, another position due to the chronic bullying behavior. I was unable to find any legal recourse for their behavior. Unfortunately, I was told it was fairly common. I have been in my new workplace for almost a year now and have had no issues at all here. It is a warm and welcoming environment.

I also worked in a library where I was the supervisor and a couple of female employees were the bullies. No matter if the bullies are above, below or at the same level you are at it is a challenging situation. And many other people, again whether they are above, below or at the same level as you, are fearful about getting involved, they don't know what to do and they don't want to get attacked themselves, so solving the problem can be a challenge. If everyone stands together against the bullies it works out best, but most people can't do it.

The results of this study support the findings of the previous research that reported the cases of managers who are bullied by their staff.⁵⁸ In addition, some respondents commented that they were bullied by other people that they reported to, such as a town manager and in many cases, members of the Library Board of Trustees. Also, there were reports of being bullied by multiple people, such as a co-worker and the library director. The results clearly

demonstrate that bullying involves a lot of different dynamics of personal interactions with others in the workplace.

Table 5 shows the experience with workplace bullying by respondent's age. The largest age category of those that responded, at 35.8% was ages 55 to 64, which was approximately double that number in both the 25 to 34 year and 35 to 44 year categories. The second largest category, at 22.8% was ages 45 to 54. To examine whether the differences of bullying experience by respondent's age were significant, the chi-square test was conducted. A chi-square analysis, $c^2 (5, N = 565) = 13.629, p = .018$, revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in experience with workplace bullying by respondent's age. The results indicate that the two age groups of 35 to 44 and 45 to 54 reported their bullying experience more often than the other age groups. A majority of the respondents in these two age groups reported their bullying experience respectively. This finding further supports previous studies reporting that bullying was associated with age.⁵⁹ Several comments addressed age as a factor respondents felt affected the bullying.

Bullying has been in the form of ageism and inappropriate/unprofessional comments from administrative staff.

I, as well as other "over 60" faculty members feel very unsupported and neglected by the young administration. Bullying takes the form of not responding or not standing up for us if there is a confron-

tation with students and/or parents. The attitude that we are "too old" to work with children is very demeaning.

In order to test the relationships between experience with workplace bullying and the other individual variables of respondents such as gender, education level, library position, and years at the library, chi-square analyses were conducted. No significant relationships were found between the variables. In addition, chi-square tests were used to examine the relationships between experience with workplace bullying and the individual traits of bullies such as gender and position. No significant relationships were found between these variables.

As seen in **Table 6**, the majority (58.7%) of the respondents experienced health issues as a result of bullying. The specific health issues that were experienced included stress (41%), anxiety (30%), depression (21%), headaches (13%), sleep issues (13%), migraines (6%), insomnia (6%), muscle aches (3%) and issues with weight gain/weight loss (3%). Those who reported workplace bullying experienced at times persistent and serious health consequences as a result of the bullying. A number of respondents made additional comments about health issues associated with bullying. Some of them are as follows.

Although I did not suffer "physical health" issues, I certainly suffered "mental health-wise" and emotional issues. This person was a pure bully, and the way she did it was under the radar so it would be hard to discipline this type of bullying.

My experience being bullied was very traumatic and had a great impact on my mental and physical health as well as on my current difficult financial status.

It is extremely important to this profession, which I believe has very sadly allowed for increasingly more abuses of power, even in academia. Unfortunately, corporate-minded administration has left very few rights to those abused by library supervisors. I resigned from a tenured position because of the constant screaming at me and restructuring that made it very clear that I was specifically not wanted under his new directorship. It has taken me over 6 months to recover from depression, not to mention the financial loss of not having a job. Since I worked in an at-will employment state in which tenure no longer means what it is supposed to mean, I felt there were no state resources to help me.

There were witnesses, and they have been brave, too--a couple of my colleagues also left

Table 6. Health Issues from Bullying

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	149	58.7
No	105	41.3
Total	254	100.0

because of the abuses allowed to continue by the Vice President of Academic Affairs (she seemed to agree with and encouraged the new library director's hostility towards a targeted group). As a woman, I paid the biggest price losing my baby due to all this stress.

Workplace bullying: it's there, and if it doesn't break you physically, then it breaks you emotionally and mentally, leaving scars that may affect you for life even in your new job.

In order to examine the relationships between health effects and the individual variables of respondents such as a gender, an age, an education level, a library position, and years at the library, chi-square tests were conducted. No significant relationships were found between the variables.

As noted in **Table 7**, only 69 people (12.1%) out of the total 571 participants in the first survey reported that they left the workplace because of bullying. The quitting rate of 12.1 percent is much lower than the rates found in previous studies in other work environments, which reported generally over 30 percent of bullied employees quitted their jobs.⁶⁰ This library- quitting rate would be considered underrepresented because the sample of the first survey included only library personnel who are currently on email distribution lists maintained by state library organizations in New England. Those who left library jobs permanently because of bullying may not be even on the email distribution lists any longer. Of those who left the library workplace because of bullying, many looked for and found a new position. The results of this study showed that 71% left for another job, while almost 25% resigned and nearly 5% were terminated. A few respondents made additional comments about leaving their jobs.

I ended up leaving after 6 months, 3 months of probation and 3 months of regular employment. When I left both parties agreed that it "wasn't the right fit" though the town knew it was for other reasons. The director of the library (small town public) turned a blind eye to the situation and told me I needed to work on ways to get the

Table 7. Reasons Respondents Left Bullying Workplace

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Resigned from the position	17	24.6
Left for a new position	49	71.0
Terminated from the position	3	4.3
Total	69	100.0

other librarian to trust me, as if that were the root of the problem, and that was what was needed to fix the issue. I'm not sure I'll ever work for a public library again. I have no interest in working in that kind of environment ever again.

This occurred over 30 years ago. If it happened now, I would fight rather than resign. With age comes wisdom.

Table 8 shows the results of the second questionnaire survey that was sent to the sampled 191 large public and academic libraries in New England to see if they have policies regarding bullying in the workplace. Altogether 65 administrators of large public and academic libraries in the six New England states participated in the second survey--a response rate of 34 percent. About two-thirds of the participants that responded to the survey were public library directors and the other one-third of them were academic library directors. Out of the 65 large public and academic libraries that responded, only six libraries (9.2%) had anti-bullying policies. Most of these policies originated at the city/town or college/university level. Library administrators did report that some had harassment policies in place that covered bullying behaviors in the workplace, and there was a trend to add harassment definitions that included bullying behaviors and broadening existing sexual harassment policies to be harassment policies in general. Even though more academic libraries tend to have anti-bullying policies than public libraries do, a chi-square analysis revealed that there was no significant relationship between the two variables (library type and anti-bullying policy). The

results of this study clearly demonstrate that not many libraries have anti-bullying policies.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary purposes of the study were to investigate how frequently bullying occurs in libraries and whether anti-bullying policies exist in libraries. The results of the study clearly showed that workplace bullying exists in library workplace environments. It affects all kinds of libraries and library personnel and has profound consequences for the persons who experience it and the dynamics of the libraries that they work in. The majority of the respondents reported experiencing health issues from workplace bullying. Stress, anxiety and depression were among the highest reported health issues. A significant number of respondents reported leaving the bullying workplace for a new position, demonstrating clearly that libraries are losing personnel who experience bullying in the workplace. In addition, respondents reported financial issues from having to leave positions when workplace bullying occurred and being unable to easily find other library employment.

Workplace bullying was reported across gender lines, workplace positions, education levels, and years at the library. While a majority of respondents reported being bullied by supervisors, comments from respondents noted that bullying occurred at all levels. In particular, the results of the quantitative data analyses revealed that workplace bullying was associated with the library type and respondents' age, respectively. Academic and special library personnel reported experience with workplace bullying signifi-

Table 8. Library Type by Anti-Bullying Policy

Library Type	Anti-Bullying Policy		Total
	Yes	No	
Public	3 (50.0%)	41 (69.5%)	44 (67.7%)
	3 (50.0%)	18 (30.5%)	21 (32.3%)
Total	6 (100.0%)	59 (100.0%)	65 (100.0%)

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Harassment Prevention: Responding to Sexual, Racial, and Bullying Incidents Involving Staff or Patrons

Mark Twain said, "Everybody talks about the weather, but no one does anything about it." As a training issue, it's the same with sexual and racial harassment and bullying prevention; everybody thinks they know about it, what to do or not to do in the workplace, and yet, it's still near the top of the complaints filed with or by the federal and state Equal Employment Opportunity Commissions.

Sexual and racial harassment and bullying prevention in any library organization is about having an updated and accurate policy, training all employees to follow that policy, and then enforcing the policy, using consequences for the perpetrators (who could be staff members or patrons), and support for the victims.

This 60-minute training program is suitable for all library directors, managers, supervisors, and (full and part-time) employees.

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- Quid Pro Quo Harassment
- Defining Racial Harassment
- Defining Bullying and "Abusive Conduct": Response Protocols
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Presenter: As a trainer, speaker, author, and consultant, Dr. Steve Albrecht is internationally known for his expertise in high-risk HR issues. He specializes in workplace and school violence awareness and crisis response programs for private-sector firms, municipal and state government, K-12 schools, and colleges and universities. In 1994, Dr. Albrecht co-wrote *Ticking Bombs: Defusing Violence in the Workplace*, one of the first business books on workplace violence. Besides his work as a conference presenter and keynote speaker, he appears in the media and on the Internet, as a source on workplace violence, security, and crime. His 21 business and police books include *Library Security*; *Tough Training Topics*; *Added Value Negotiating*; *Service, Service, Service!*; and *Fear and Violence on the Job*. Dr. Albrecht holds a doctoral degree in Business Administration (D.B.A.), an M.A. in Security Management, a B.A. in English, and a B.S. in Psychology. He is board certified in HR, security management, employee coaching, and threat assessment.

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cantly more often than public and school library personnel. The two age groups of 35 to 44 and 45 to 54 reported their bullying experience more often than the other age groups. In addition, significantly more male library personnel bullied people whom they supervised more than they bullied their co-workers.

The most telling part of the research was the comments that respondents shared about the ways bullying affected their work-

place experience and their lives. Despite significant reports of workplace bullying in libraries, not many libraries have policies that deal with this workplace challenge. Less than 10 percent of the responded 65 large public and academic libraries reported having specific anti-bullying policies. Clearly, this needs to change. Workplace bullying is a significant issue and if it is occurring in our libraries, we need to be cognizant of how it affects library personnel and the

workplace. Losing good personnel to bullying, health care costs incurred from bullying and lower moral are all consequences of bullying that impede the formation of healthy, productive library workplace environments. The first step is recognizing that workplace bullying exists in library workplace environments. Further research studies that document the existence of workplace bullying in libraries, nationwide, seem warranted.

» **Developing anti-bullying policies and procedures that incorporate a zero-tolerance policy for bullying, formal reporting and documentation processes, and continuous assessment of the policies and procedures can help alleviate workplace bullying. Having supports and remedies for those who experience workplace bullying is also important. No one who experiences bullying should feel alone, and as librarians we need to do better.**

Interviewing library personnel to further tell the story of workplace bullying in libraries would also be an important step.

Developing anti-bullying policies and procedures that incorporate a zero-tolerance policy for bullying, formal reporting and documentation processes, and continuous assessment of the policies and procedures can help alleviate workplace bullying.⁶¹ Having supports and remedies for those who experience workplace bullying is also important. No one who experiences bullying should feel alone, and as librarians we need to do better. Since workplace bullying has serious negative impacts not only on library personnel but also on libraries, library administrators should proactively address this serious social issue. According to a recent U.S. Workplace Bullying Institute survey, however, 72 percent of the employers deny, discount, encourage, rationalize, or defend workplace bullying.⁶² Workplace bullying in libraries needs to be further studied in a comprehensive, systematic and sustained way because libraries have responsibilities to protect their employees from workplace bullying as well as to efficiently and effectively meet their organizational mission and goals. ■

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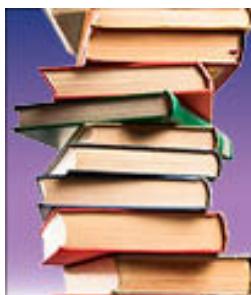
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» Media literacy outside of the classroom

BY CALLIE WIYGUL BRANSTITER, REBECCA OROZCO, CARMEN ORTH-ALFIE, AND KARNA YOUNGER

Since 2016, the public eye has turned to the problems of mis- and disinformation. As a result, many librarians sprang into action to spread the good news about information and media literacies. At the University of Kansas (KU), we initially joined the rush and created a media literacy LibGuide.¹

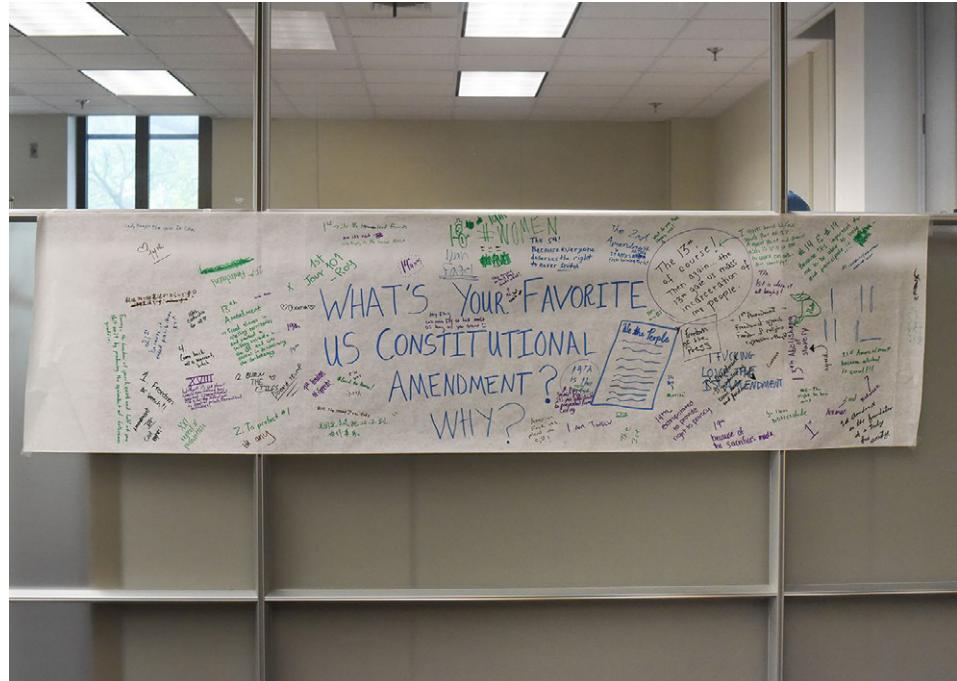
As recent scholarship has shown, dosing undergraduates with media literacy instruction is an effective response that can help students trump even their own political biases when evaluating information online.²

Problemsatically, in our experience, not all course faculty invite librarians into their classes for media literacy instruction, and LibGuides are most effective when coupled with a class. To be more proactive, we developed a series of events and tools to provide students with lessons in media and information literacy outside of the classroom. Here we share how we fact checked a U.S. presidential debate with students, gave course faculty a platform to challenge the way we think about the media, and provided students multiple outlets to voice their opinions on such topics as detecting misinformation, writing Fake News Mad Libs, and valuing the First Amendment. We will overview the success of our media literacy campaign, and delineate our own failings so that you can launch your own plan.

U.S. PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE FACT-CHECKING PARTY

In partnership with the campus committee Make Your Mark, several KU librarians collaborated to host a live fact-checking party for the final U.S. presidential debate.³ The aim of the fact-checking party was to foster student engagement and authority in civic life. Undergraduates were active partners and participants in the event.

Our process for preparing for and holding the event involved many people inside



On Constitution Day, some students glibly commented on their favorite amendment while others seriously reflected on the long-term effects of some amendments.

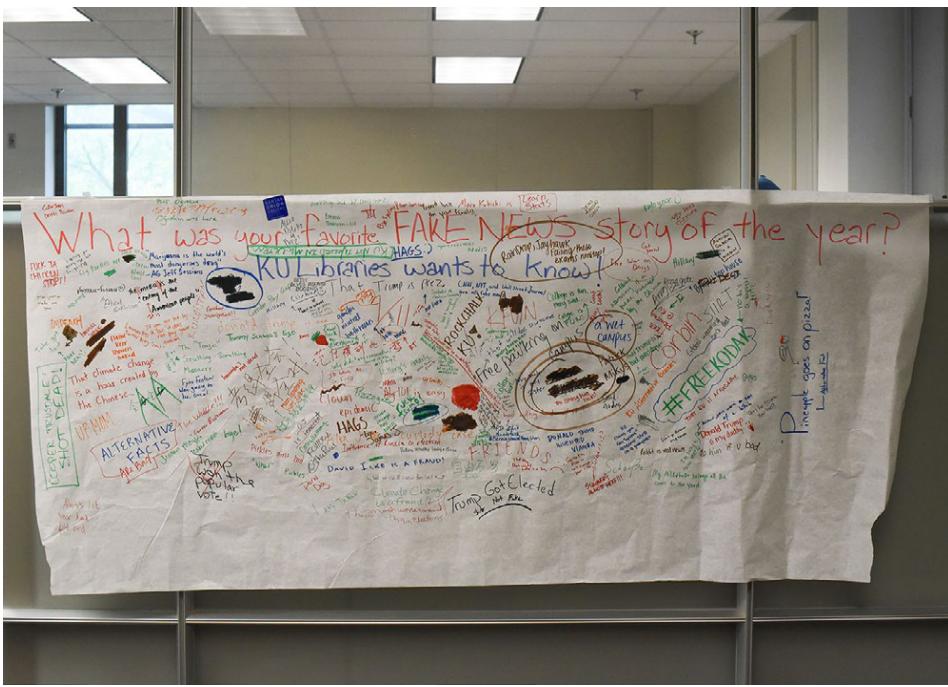
and outside of the libraries. First, our organizing team of librarians recruited students as fact checkers and audience members. Three journalism students answered our call to be official fact checkers alongside three librarians. Dividing up responsibility for debate topics, librarians and the students collaborated on a LibGuide to be used during the event,⁴ and practiced our fact-checking skills and our workflow against a recording of the first 2016 U.S. presidential debate.

The night of the event, approximately 40 students joined us in one of the libraries' large spaces. There, on one screen we displayed a Google Doc with the fact-checkers' immediate research findings. Another screen tracked our official fact-checked statements and audience questions posted to Twitter with the hashtag #kudebate-watch. The debate was broadcast on a large central screen. Students also flashed flags, which we provided, when they thought a statement was true, false, or a red herring.

In addition, by impromptu student demand, we used a whiteboard to tally buzzwords, such as "emails" or "Russia."

Preparing for the event was a time-cost, but afforded us a great opportunity to partner with students. Between swapping research tips and strategies, we found ourselves opening numerous tabs in our browsers to conduct research. In this sense, we were collaboratively building skills to research "laterally," a technique used by professional fact checkers to efficiently and effectively identify reliable sources to assess information.⁵

Though we only trained three students to fact check, students in the audience actively researched and Tweeted comments on their own devices while waving their flags. By providing physical and virtual platforms for student thought and expression, we effectively fostered an atmosphere in which students could question and assert their own authority as civic agents. Participating students were further validated as research-



As part of the welcome week at the University of Kansas, students shared their favorite fake news story of the year.

ers and fact checkers when the campus newspaper reported on their successes on the front page the next day.⁶

TEACH-INS

A teach-in is “an extended meeting usually held on a college campus for lectures, debates, and discussions to raise awareness of or express a position on a social or political issue.”⁷ At KU, this entails faculty giving ten-minute lightning talks in related areas of research before a general discussion. We chose to organize a series of teach-ins as part of our media literacy initiative for two reasons: disinformation campaigns have targeted social justice and activist movements, and KU Libraries had successfully addressed the socio-political context of media literacy through a December 2016 teach-in. This earlier event, the “Standing Rock” teach-in, brought nearly 300 people to KU Libraries, including faculty and students from KU and Haskell Indian Nations University, as well as members of the greater Lawrence community.⁸

We held two teach-ins related to our media literacy campaign. The first, “Read Between the Lines: The Media and You,” occurred in April 2017. The four speakers were professors in the School of Journalism and Mass Communications and the Department of Film and Media Studies. Unfortunately, this teach-in was not well attended, drawing about 20 people, likely due to the fact that finals were around the corner and our

minimal publicity effort. Additionally, the advertised topic was too broad, it was not a clickbait topic. We may have drawn a larger crowd if we had marketed the speakers’ topics, such as fact-checking techniques, the use of film as a critical lens of American history and race, or how social media can mobilize social movements.

The second media literacy teach-in, “Social Justice, the Media, and You,” occurred in fall 2017. The teach-in featured lightning talks by professors in Communication Studies, School of Journalism and Mass Communications, and International and Interdisciplinary Studies and Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies. The topics related to social justice topics on campus and included the Emmett Till Memory Project; using media to prompt the U.S. National Park Service to include historically significant LGBTQ sites in its register; media representation of ethnic and racial minorities; and a feminist critique of social media trolling.

This teach-in was well attended by about 50 people, which was likely related to a few factors. First, it occurred when students were not consumed with finals. Also, we publicized the event earlier and more frequently through the libraries’ social media account and campus partners. It did not hurt that one of the speakers offered her students extra credit for attendance.

FINALS AND WELCOME WEEK

The second way we sought to engage stu-

dent in their opinions about disinformation and misinformation was held during spring 2017 finals weeks and fall 2017 welcome week. We posed the following questions on butcher block paper: “What was your favorite fake news story of the year?” and “How can you tell a news story is fake?” We encouraged students to write down answers to these questions by placing the paper on tables near the high-traffic entrances of the main and undergraduate libraries, creating free-speech zones. The response was tremendous and varied. Students not only answered the question, but they also annotated, censored, and replied back to the responses of their peers. The students were having brief, but authentic debates, while maintaining anonymity.

In addition during spring 2017 finals week, we wanted to offer students a fun way to unpack the creation of “fake news” and to give them a brain break. We did this by providing students Fake News “Mad Libs” and coloring sheets on which students could create their own satirical news stories. These handouts were left on tables near the entrances of our main and undergraduate libraries during finals week in the free speech zones. We did not track usage of these handouts or ask for feedback on them. We merely offered students an opportunity to think about how “fake news” and “alternative facts” might be created.

The handouts did move quickly the first couple of days, however, usage declined further into the week. Thus, if we decide to do this again in the future we would like to offer more “Mad Libs” and coloring sheet options to keep students engaged throughout the week.

U.S. CONSTITUTION AND CITIZENSHIP DAY

After engaging with students through more event-based programming, we wanted to give them a way to express their opinions about the disinformation and misinformation that surrounded them. The first of such activities, U.S. Constitution and Citizenship Day (Constitution Day), provided an opportunity to engage students in conversations about the First Amendment, freedom of the press, and other constitutional rights related to the media. The campaign included analog and digital methods in our main and undergraduate libraries.

Our analog methods included the distribution of free pocket editions of the U.S. Constitution, which were in English and Spanish and contained constitutional trivia,

» **Engaging students in media literacy discussions outside of the classroom yielded some great benefits. The student feedback we received through teach-in discussions and graffitied butcher block paper indicates that students are engaged with the news and willing to debate their points of view. In the future, we hope to continue these conversations to better understand how students navigate and are impacted by the media.**

available at designated free speech zones. We posed questions such as "What is your favorite U.S. Constitutional amendment? Why?" and "What would you change about the U.S. Constitution?" We call the results of these zones "graffiti paper."

To further encourage asynchronous dialogue among students, we posted a large U.S. Constitution display on the wall in our undergraduate library. There, we fixed a copy of the Bill of Rights next to selected Amendments, such as the First and Fourteenth Amendments, above a long roll of butcher block paper where students posted their comments. We then assembled and placed table tents with U.S. Constitution questions on group study tables. We selected questions from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' "Civics Flash Cards for the Naturalization Test."⁹ In the digital format, these same flash cards were displayed on the informational monitors on the main floor of the libraries. We also promoted the activities on social media using the hashtag #KUConstitutionDay.

Our Constitution Day activities brought high student engagement with minimal efforts on our part. The few hundred copies of the Constitution were gone in about three days. Students and others communicated opinions through the graffiti paper, filling over four five-foot-long butcher block paper sheets. Ironically this activity, which promoted free speech, also prompted some censorship with participants scribbling out comments. Additionally, other campus partners helped spread the campaign's message.

For instance, a professor in journalism posed the questions to students and videoed their responses. He has plans to make these tapings available to the public as a snapshot of students' opinions of press freedoms. The Office of First Year Experience re-Tweeted the constitutional wall display.

CONCLUSION

Engaging students in media literacy discussions outside of the classroom yielded some great benefits. The student feedback we received through teach-in discussions and graffitied butcher block paper indicates that students are engaged with the news and willing to debate their points of view. In the future, we hope to continue these conversations to better understand how students navigate and are impacted by the media. ■

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Notes

1. "Media Literacy," University of Kansas Libraries, accessed December 13, 2017, <https://guides.lib.ku.edu/medialiteracy>. We thank Tami Albin, Brian Moss, and Amalia Monroe-Gulick for joining our efforts in creating this guide.
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3. The authors would like to acknowledge our partners in this event: Brian Moss, Amalia

Monroe-Gulick, LeAnn Meyer, Meggie Mapes, Nikki Pirch, Sydney Wickliffe, Jennifer Muse, Mona Ahmed, Chloe Carlson, and Reid Stein. We especially acknowledge and thank Sofia Leung for initiating and organizing the event.

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8. The authors would like to acknowledge Stephanie Gamble for initiating and co-organizing the Standing Rock teach-in with Callie Wiygul Branstiter.
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Building a better book widget: Using Alma Analytics to automate new book discovery

BY TRAVIS CLAMON

INTRODUCTION

Libraries have traditionally promoted new titles utilizing a shelf or display in the library to encourage discovery. Technology in the past decade has enabled the adoption of electronic books as well as growth in online education. While the idea of new title discovery is still important, the traditional method relies on an outdated expectation that users solely rely on the physical presence of the library. This method of delivery and promotion needs to adapt digitally and incorporate electronic and physical books as a whole.

While discovery systems handle virtual searching and browsing of books, they do not enable new title discovery out of the box. Some librarians often resort to creating static lists of curated titles. However, current e-Book ownership models have complicated matters of keeping displays and title lists current. The number of additions and deletions often reaches the thousands as eBook vendors release updates throughout each semester. To have reliable data, we need to be able to retrieve automated data to keep titles accurate.

At East Tennessee State University, we have developed a program that enables automated new title discovery utilizing Alma, our current library management system. Specifically, we used Alma Analytics, the reporting component of Alma. These reports, which contain new title data, refresh each day when Alma runs indexing. This article will outline the development and implementation of these widgets.

PROJECT BACKGROUND AND GOALS

In the past two years, we have made multiple efforts in addressing the goal

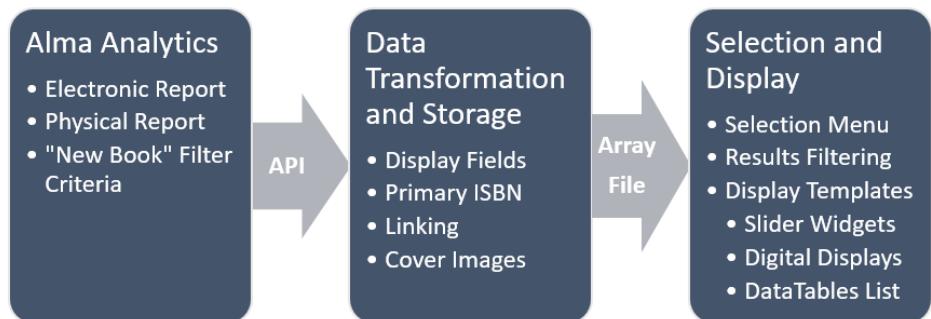


Figure 1. High-Level Overview

of new title discovery. The initial idea of automated book sliders occurred when the library was redesigning the website in 2017. One primary task of the redesign was to create uniform subject guides for all of our academic programs. One initiative of the subject guides was to make users aware of the new books in their subject or program. Our efforts of creating a book slider for each subject guide relied on separate Alma analytics reports and scripts for automation. Shortly after the website went live, the library also implemented a new print book widget on our digital display. We soon realized the workflow of each widget was becoming redundant and could not scale to include multiple subjects, formats or templates. Implementing new data columns or changes required editing numerous analytic reports and scripts. As the number of individual book widgets and interest from librarians increased, we decided in late 2018 to rewrite our code to introduce new features and eliminate redundancy.

The development of the project happened as time allowed by the electronic resources librarian. A total time is unavailable, but we estimate that 50 hours went into developing the new version. Before the rewrite began, we identified technical and user requirements that would satisfy exist-

ing workflow issues:

- Implement widgets on subject guides, webpages, and digital displays.
- Multiple templates to choose from such as slider widgets and generated table lists. New templates are added without additional configuration.
- The ability to pull data on new title information (print and electronic) from a minimal number of Alma Analytic reports.
- Create a widget based on a particular subject, format, or physical location.
- Ease of use; Limited technical expertise needed to create a widget

HIGH-LEVEL OVERVIEW

We divided development into three distinct processes:

1. Alma Analytics: Reports have been created that warehouse the new book data. We then retrieve the data using the Alma Analytics API.
2. Data Transformation and Storage: We transform various data fields and store them into an array file.
3. Selection and Display: Accepts the array in step 2 along with additional parameters to create the widget. A selection menu allows librarians to preview their widget and receive an embed code for display.

SECTION 1: ALMA ANALYTICS

The first step in the process is creating an Alma Analytics report. When creating a new report, a user will first select a subject area. Since our goal is to include both print and electronic books, we created an analytics report for each format in order to capture all necessary data fields. The print report comes from the “Physical Items” subject area, while the electronic report comes from the “E-Inventory” subject area.

Report Fields

An important next step of the process is identifying the data fields needed for the project. This is dependent upon the intended uses of the widgets and the information you want to provide. Based on our needs and previous experiences, we were able to identify the following fields in each format:

Report Filters

Report filters will define the overall target collection of books. At this step, we had to define what our library considered “new” for electronic and print formats. Book purchasing and subscription changes will vary in each library. We also imposed a publication date range to ensure that we do not feature older materials. We tested various year ranges to get an idea of the amount of results we wanted to store in a dataset. East Tennessee State University defined the following criteria for each report:

- Publication Date must be between the past three years up until the future year.
- ISBN is not null. The ISBN is used for linking and cover image purposes.
- Portfolio or Item creation date must be during the past 180 days.
- Item must be available or activated for online use.
- Specification of Item locations and/or electronic collections are optional. We excluded Government Document books using this filter since they were not relevant.
- If the location contains more than books, a material type filter is required.

Retrieving Report Data from Alma Analytics API

Once the report was created and we felt satisfied with the selection criteria, we used the Ex Libris Alma Retrieve Analytics report API to receive and store the data from both analytics reports. The API requires a key along with the path to the analytics report. If more than 1000 results

Table 1: Alma Analytics report filters for physical and electronic Items

Data Field	Physical Items Report	E-Inventory Report
Title	Bibliographic Details -> Title	
Author	Bibliographic Details -> Author	
ISBN	Bibliographic Details -> ISBN (Normalized)	
Publication Date	Bibliographic Details -> Publication Date	
Upload Date	Physical Item Details -> Creation Date	Portfolio Creation Date -> Portfolio Creation Date
Subjects	Bibliographic Details -> Subjects	
LC Classification Group	LC Classifications -> Group1 LC Classifications -> Group2 LC Classifications -> Group3 LC Classifications -> Group4	
Call Number	Holding Details -> Permanent Call Number	N/A
Location Code	Location -> Location Code	N/A
Location Name	Location -> Location Name	N/A
Collection	N/A	Electronic Collection -> Electronic Collection Public Name
MMS_ID	Bibliographic Details -> MMS Id	

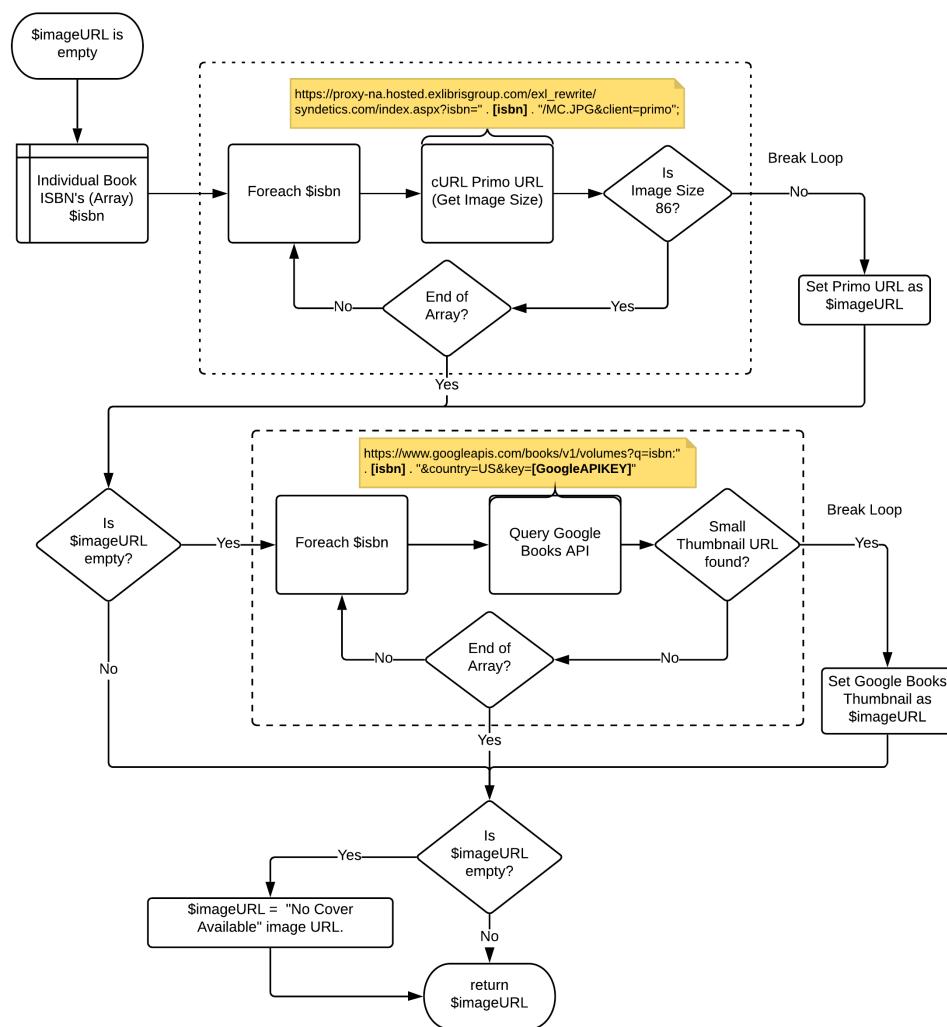


Figure 2. Cover image retrieval process using Primo and Google Books API (see code)

The screenshot shows a search result for a book titled "Google, making information accessible : the search engine that changed the world /" by Fastré, Guillaume. The page includes options to export to various formats like BibTeX, RIS, and EndNote, and links to sign in or get the full text via EBSCO eBooks Business Collection.

Figure 3. Sample URL linking to the Primo services page using ISBN and Source ID parameters.

are returned from an individual report, a resumption token allows you to receive the remaining results.

One issue we encountered when receiving the data is that the column names are generic (column1, column2, etc.). The column numbers returned did not match the column order in the Alma Analytics report display either. Also, we noticed fields such as the LC classification groups had different column numbers between the print and electronic responses. Fortunately, these columns remain the same after repeat API calls. We resolved this matter by creating an array for each report in our script that cross-matches the response column number to a more appropriate variable name.

SECTION 2: DATA TRANSFORMATION AND STORAGE

Once we have the data from Alma Analytics, some additional transformation is required to get the data into a usable format. From the API response, we convert the data to an XML Element and process each column using a foreach statement. Most of the fields were a direct copy over into the final array, but others needed some additional work:

- Title:** We noticed some of our book titles had all upper case letters, mostly due to one particular vendor's MARC records. In order to make a consistent appearance, we used the PHP mb_convert_case function and specified a MB_CASE_TITLE conversion. Slashes were also common at the end of each title. We used regex to remove the slashes.

Request Date	Title	Author	ISBN	Source
3/7/2019	Principles and practice of pediatric infectious diseases /		9780323401814	books_widget
3/11/2019	Meyler's side effects of drugs : the international encyclopedia of adverse drug reactions and interactions /		9780444635938	books_widget
3/12/2019	3D integration in VLSI circuits : implementation technologies and applications /		9781138710399(Hardback)	books_widget
3/13/2019	Applied hierarchical modeling in ecology : analysis of distribution, abundance and species richness in R and BUGS /	Kéry, Marc, author.	0128013788;9780128013786	books_widget
	Images of the art museum : connecting gaze and discourse in the history of museology /		3110341360	books_widget
	Mastering the Nikon D850 /	Young, Darrell, 1958- author.	1681983729	books_widget
	Numerical simulation of hydraulic fracturing : multiphysics theory and applications /	Shen, Xinpui, 1963, author.	9781138029620(Hardback)	books_widget
3/14/2019	Basic & Clinical Pharmacology, 14e		1259641155	books_widget
	Clinical pharmacology /	Brown, M. J. author. (Morris Jonathan),	9780702073281	books_widget
	Goodman and Gilman's Manual of Pharmacology and Therapeutics	Hilal-Dandan, Randa., ath.	9780071792882.	books_widget
3/15/2019	Braunwald's heart disease : a textbook of cardiovascular medicine /		9780323463423	books_widget

Figure 4. Sample Alma Analytics link resolver report of widget click usage.

• **Publication Date:** This field varied by record and sometimes included copyright symbols, periods, and brackets. We used regex again to remove the invalid characters and leave only digits remaining. This was required so we could sort the publication date correctly.

ISBN

The ISBN is used for cover image and linking purposes. Since most records contain multiple ISBN numbers, we needed a way to determine which ISBN would return a cover image from our discovery system, Ex Libris Primo. We first started using the first ISBN provided, but quickly realized that it did not always return a valid image.

We resolved the issue by breaking up the ISBN's into an array. Each ISBN assembles as an URL and then a cURL call checks the file size of the URL. The Primo service returns a small 1x1 white pixel if a cover image is not available. We determined the white pixel returned by Primo was consistently 86 bytes. Once the first ISBN came across that had a file size other than 86 bytes, the loop would end and the ISBN would be become the preferred value.

At this point, we analyzed the data again and determined that around 1% of print books and 5% of electronic books were unable to retrieve a cover image from Primo. We queried these ISBN's with Google Books and were able to retrieve a few more cover images. This resulted in us modifying the code to do an additional call using the Google Books API (<https://developers.google.com/books/>) only in cases when a cover image is unavailable from Primo.

We quickly noticed that adding the full array of ISBN's along with the Google Books API made the import process much longer and would sometimes timeout. In order to reduce the amount of repeat cURL calls every time the import process occurs, we started storing the cover image URL, current date, and the corresponding MMS_ID (Alma record ID) in a separate array file. We scan this array before initiating a cURL call. The array retains data between imports. As time continues and the array grows, we will clean out older records by filtering the date stamp.

Custom subject tagging

Another relevant section was finding a way to assign custom subject tags to books. These tags correlate to the subject guides available on the library website. Due to the variations of vendor-supplied MARC records,

Which filter would you like to apply?

- title author pub_date upload_date mod_date location_code subjects type

Choose a value for your filter...

- online esbb4 esbb3 esbsc esbnw esbb2

Choose a template...

- BrightSign (Digital Display) Subject Guides

Embed Code

https://libs.etsu.edu/books-display/dev/display.php?filter=location_code&que



Figure 5. Internal interface that assists with book selection and widget implementation

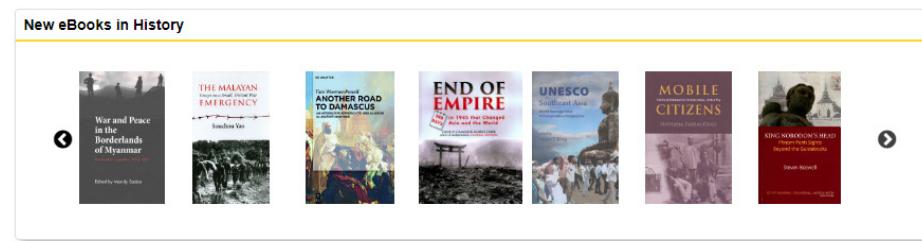


Figure 6. Slider widget embedded on the history subject guide

we determined keyword matching requires the LC group classification, title, and subjects columns. A case statement contains all fifty-seven custom subject terms for the university. We made matches for each subject tag to the corresponding Library of Congress classification terms. If a match does not occur by LC Group, we attempt to do a keyword match using the subjects and title columns from the report. In a similar fashion, custom keywords are also matched using a case statement. These case statement files are stored separately as include files in the subjects folder and are available to reference from the GitLab repository (<https://gitlab.com/clamon/alma-book-widget>).

Links

Subject guide widgets have links attached to book covers, along with titles in a list view. Instead of linking directly to an eBook or a detail page for a physical book, we decided to send all requests to our "Get It @ ETSU" link resolver. We decided on this approach for statistical and maintenance reasons. The primary ISBN is the parameter the link resolver uses to locate the title. The other parameter we used is the service id "sid" parameter. We assigned a default value of books_widget. This value allows us to retrieve usage statistics using the link resolver object in Alma Analytics. The link resolver can also provide the most current availability information on a book,

rather than the 24-hour index window in Alma Analytics.

Data storage and automation

Once all the data processes, the final output consists of a multidimensional array stored as a file inside the export folder. The array size varies, but it typically contains between 1,000 to 5,000 book titles. We chose the array file over a database due to low maintenance and its compatibility with the DataTables plugin. This process runs daily using a cron job on our server. To confirm that the call and import were successful, we inserted a Slack webhook (<https://api.slack.com/incoming-webhooks>) to notify us of the status each day.

SECTION 3: SELECTION AND DISPLAY

We developed the selection and display component separately from the transformation part. This component accepts the multidimensional array file created after transformation. When generating a widget, three parameters are required: filter type, filter query, and template. These parameters are imported from PHP \$_GET variables in the URL. The filter type correlates to an individual data column inside the multidimensional array. With our current setup, we can filter data on types such as title, author, publication year, location code, subject, or type (physical/electronic). The filter query is the search keyword. We created a function that accepts these values, searches the array, and calls upon the required template to generate the widget HTML.

For ease of use, we developed an interface that assists with creating a widget. We scan the original array to show all possible combinations of data for filter types as well as templates. Both title and author allow free-text input, while the other fields present as options (radio buttons). Once all selections are made, a widget preview frame appears, and embed code is generated.

» Once all the data processes, the final output consists of a multidimensional array stored as a file inside the export folder. The array size varies, but it typically contains between 1,000 to 5,000 book titles. We chose the array file over a database due to low maintenance and its compatibility with the DataTables plugin.

```

1 function createSlider($array_source, $filter, $query, $template) {
2     $results_array = array();
3
4     //find results
5     foreach ($array_source as $key => $val){
6
7         if(is_array($val[$filter]) === true) {
8             foreach($val[$filter] as $term) {
9                 if(strpos($term, $query)!== false){
10                     $results_array[] = $val;
11
12                     }//end if
13                 }//end for
14             } elseif(strpos($val[$filter], $query)!== false){
15                 $results_array[] = $val;
16             } //end else if
17         } //end foreach
18
19         //Pass results_array to the designated template
20         require "templates/".$template.".php";
21     } //end createSlider

```

Example widget selections:

- New books located on the second floor (Location Code).
- New books published in 2019.
- New books subject-tagged in Nursing, Computing, etc.
- New books in Research Methods (free-text keyword).

Display templates

A template folder retains multiple different widget display options. We had three formats we wanted to begin with: a small sliding widget for subject guides, a full-screen slider widget for our digital display, and a list view for informational needs. From a technical perspective, display.php processes the widget query, and a new JSON array is created with the results. At this point, we use the template parameter specified from

the URL to include the corresponding PHP file (“template”) that is being used. Each template file will then process the results array as needed to create the intended widget. Since most of the development time focused on building the data array, we wanted to utilize open source components for our templates. These plugins are stored in a separate folder for easy updating.

For the sliding widgets, we found a carousel package called Slick developed by Ken Wheeler (<http://kenwheeler.github.io/slick/>). This package allows for single and multi-item sliders that are responsive to mobile devices. For the subject guides, we used a multi-item carousel and specified three different responsive configurations. The setup allowed us to show seven book covers at a time for desktop displays while offering a mobile and tablet friendly display

of two to five sliding book covers. HTML title tags were added containing book titles for accessibility purposes. The slider automatically rotates every few seconds and the arrow buttons allow for manual control.

We encountered some initial difficulty importing this widget onto our subject guides. We tried first using the remote script option, and while the slider would initially appear, any screen resizing would cause the widget to disappear. We determined there was a jQuery conflict between LibGuides CMS and the Slick package. Instead of using the remote script function to pull in the widget, we ultimately decided to use an iFrame. Since HTML code is necessary, instructions and code are provided at the selection menu along with a copy to clipboard function.

For the digital display, we utilized the single item carousel and customized the CSS to fit the display appropriately. In regards to visual design, we chose a dark background with white text that conveys title, author, and location. Since the display constantly rotates throughout the day, we configured BrightSign (our digital display hardware) to refresh the webpage every 15 minutes. When it refreshes, the script will randomly choose a new order of titles to give a new and fresh appearance.

The list view is useful when providing an overall list of new books. We were able implement the DataTables plugin (<https://datatables.net/>), which enhances HTML tables with little effort. DataTables accepts our converted JSON array and displays the appropriate fields using a custom display configuration. The subject and type (electronic /physical) were configured as dropdown sorting menus. We had to do some additional work to get the subject dropdown to work and sort alphabetically by breaking up the array of tagged subjects. To reduce loading time, we set deferRender equal to true so data is only loaded for the current page of results and not the entire book array. This is important when you are displaying book covers so the browser does not request thousands of images at once.

We also implemented button plugins to allow for Excel data exports. This feature is useful for end users who want an offline copy, but as well for librarians who want to send a copy to interested faculty. We also explored PDF exports using the PDFmake plugin, but we encountered issues with book url's splitting into multiple lines on the PDF. Adobe Reader would only recognize

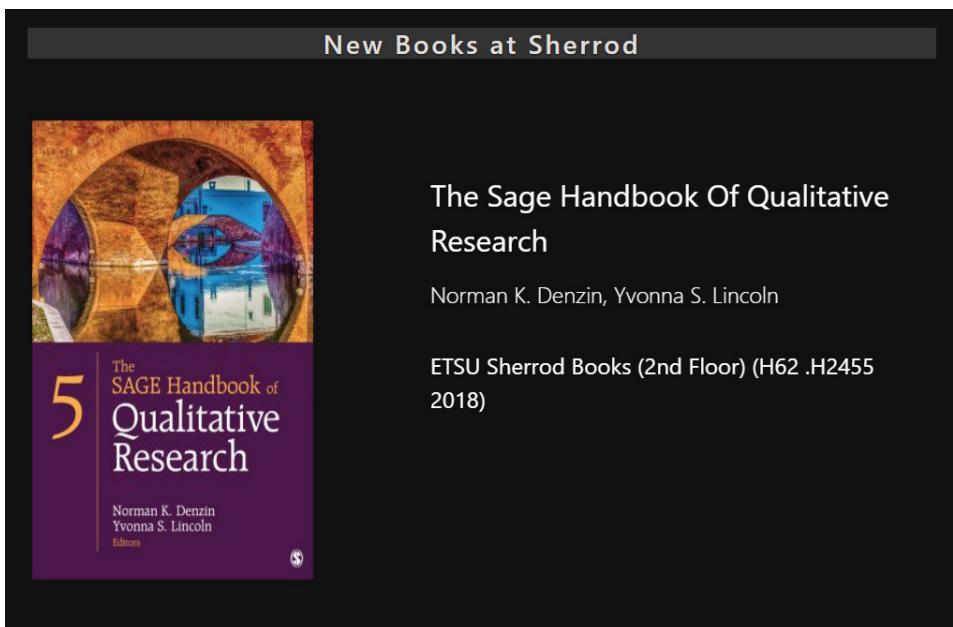


Figure 7. Slider widget embedded on our digital display inside the main entrance.

Browse New Books			
<input type="text"/>		<input type="button" value="Export Titles to Excel"/>	
Cover	Title	Publication Date	Collection
	A Crisis In Swiss Pluralism: The Romansh And Their Relations With The German- And Italian-Swiss In The Perspective Of A Millennium Author: Billigmeier, Robert Henry.	2016	Online Resource - EBSCOhost Academic eBook Collection (North America)
	A Dictionary Of Family History: The Genealogists' ABC Author: Scott, Jonathan.	2017	Online Resource - EBSCOhost Academic eBook Collection (North America)
	A Field Guide To Spiders Of Australia Author: Whyte, Robert, 1955- author.	2017	Online Resource - EBSCOhost Academic eBook Collection (North America)
	A Focus On Sustainable Supply Chains And Green Logistics. Author: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.	2016	Online Resource - EBSCOhost Academic eBook Collection (North America)
	A Fresh Look At Potential Output In Central, Eastern, And Southeastern European Countries Author: Podpiera, Jiri, 1976-	2017	Online Resource - EBSCOhost Academic eBook Collection (North America)
	A Grand Adventure: The Lives Of Helge And Anne Stine Ingstad And Their Discovery Of A Viking Settlement In North America Author: Ingstad, Benedicte, author.	2017	Online Resource - EBSCOhost Academic eBook Collection (North America)
	A Higher Loyalty: Truth, Lies, And Leadership Author: Comey, James B., Jr., 1960- author.	2018	ETSU Sherrod Books (3rd Floor) (HV8144.F43 C6 2018)
	A History Of Islam In Indonesia: Unity In Diversity Author: Kersten, Carool, author.	2017	Online Resource - EBSCO eBooks Religion Collection
	A History Of Mexican Literature	2016	ETSU Sherrod Books (3rd Floor) (PQ7111.H58 2016)
	A Most Elegant Equation: Euler's Formula And The Beauty Of Mathematics Author: Stipp, David, author.	2017	ETSU Sherrod Books (4th Floor) (QA255.S75 2017)

Showing 11 to 20 of 1,340 entries

Previous 1 2 3 4 5 ... 134 Next

Figure 8. List widget utilizing DataTables to display the entire array of new books

the first line of the URL when clicked, and therefore would result in a bad request. This list is available on our main books page and linked from our display widgets on our subject guides.

Limitations

As designed, a widget only supports one filter parameter. There may be a future requirement to support multiple filters, primarily if a large repository of books exists in the Alma Analytics report. We plan to wait and see how the widgets are used before deciding to rewrite the code.

Subject tagging is another challenging part of the project. It is important that appropriate subjects matching occur. This ensures our users are seeing all new relevant titles in their subject area. We plan to keep expanding the keyword list and look into the Alma configuration to see why specific titles are not inheriting LC Group classifications in Alma Analytics.

For electronic books, we determine

whether an item is new or not by the portfolio creation date. In some cases, when we have to reload an entire electronic collection in Alma, this will cause all of those titles to appear as new again. So far, this has not been an issue, but we currently do not have a workaround devised.

During the cover image retrieval process, it should be noted that the Google Books API has a daily quota limit. We were assigned a limit of 1,000 calls per day. We have made every effort to only call the Google API when needed, but if a large load of new books comes through, it may exceed the limit. You can request a higher quota, but will have to provide more information about your project to Google.

CONCLUSION

The development of this widget tool has been a worthwhile project for the library. The digital display widget on our main lobby has captured a lot of attention by both patrons and librarians. Our feedback

for the display has been positive overall, and we have made minor adjustments such as extending the timer between title changes to allow for longer recognition of the item location and call number (if physical).

We updated subject guides to include the new widgets and were able to eliminate over 50 old Alma Analytic reports. Performing results filtering in the script rather than in individual Alma Analytics reports allows for easier modifications and keyword updates. To capture eye attention to the sliding widgets, we positioned them at the top of the template and enabled auto scrolling. An example of our subject guide widget is available at <https://libraries.etsu.edu/research/guides/history/books>.

While the intended purpose of the project is to highlight new books, there is potential for other uses such as highlighting a special collection. All that would be required is modifying the filter criteria in Alma Analytics. As funds allow, we are hopeful that more digital displays are installed throughout the library, and we can focus on marketing books by collection or floor. A goal within the next year is to interview students and faculty and receive additional feedback formally. There may also be potential to expand these displays outside the library, such as in our student center and academic buildings.

The code for this project can be found on the author's GitLab page (<https://gitlab.com/clamon/alma-book-widget>). ■

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» **The development of this widget tool has been a worthwhile project for the library. The digital display widget on our main lobby has captured a lot of attention by both patrons and librarians.**

“I Remember...”: A Written-Reflection Program for Student Library Workers

BY ELLIOTT STEVENS AND MADELINE
MUNDT

PART I: WRITTEN REFLECTION IN THE RESEARCH COMMONS

*I remember all the sounds of opening the library. The *shhnk* of swiping my card through the reader outside. The creaky turn and loud *click* of the door opening after turning the handle. The echoing *clack* of my boots resonating throughout the stairwell after stepping on the concrete floor....*

These are the first few lines of a written reflection that an undergraduate student worker wrote in the library space we manage. A little over two years ago, we started a program in which we made written reflection a part of the jobs of the eight students we work with. These students staff a help desk, so periodically during their scheduled shifts, we cover the desk for them for a half hour. They have that time to reflect in writing about their work and their relationship to it, and the writing above shows a student describing what it's like to open our library space. This student focuses on the sounds our space makes, playing with onomatopoeia, and they continue:

*...The slight metal *hiss* of the stair gate's springs being bent. The low, booming *gong* that echoes through the stairwell as the gate closes and hits the metal rail, syncopated with my boots descending down the steps. The quieter, smoother *sree* of the basement door handle. The lighter, higher pitched footsteps on the tiled hallway floor. The *chk* and *bmm* of the door closing as I round the hallway corner. The *sree* of another door handle and the muted *pmm* of my boots on carpeted floor. The echoing*



**bomm, bomm, bomm* of steps on concrete in another, more acousting stairwell. The vacuum cleaner's *shvroooooooooom* getting louder and louder after each step up. The friendly *hello*, or *happy friday*. The almost unnoticeable *crinkle, crinkle, shvoop* of taking off jackets and setting down bags. The muted *click, click, click* of impatience as I wake the computer. The loud rattling and sometimes sudden *gleck, gleck, gleck* in rapid succession as I move a whiteboard without releasing the plastic brakes on the wheels. The whining*

**phwemp* of wiping down whiteboards. The *sveeeee*, *jingle, jangle*, and *svoooooo* of opening and closing the drawers to retrieve the keys. The loud, mechanical *chk, chk*, *jingle*, *chk chk chk*, and *fwooomp* of unlocking and opening the doors. The *good morning* as patrons file in.*

(Note: Throughout this article, we have chosen to preserve the spelling, punctuation, and syntax that students used in their writing and to forego any use of “SIC” in brackets.)

» We were shocked to find so little research about the value of written reflection in librarianship and student work in libraries, and we were surprised further that when we opened our search to undergraduate-student work in general, we still found next to nothing about written reflection.

Reading this student's reflection now, we are amazed anew by how creative and detailed it is. We had given this person a writing prompt for the reflection—a prompt we'll discuss later—and it's fascinating to see how they made sense of it and turned it into something wholly their own. It's of note, too, that this student wrote this reflection by memory. They weren't composing as they walked through the labyrinthine path they take to open the library in the morning. No, they were able to recall these specifics while sitting still, and such an act seems to show that the space in which they work isn't just something to remember but a Memory Palace—that is, a place that helps one remember because it's meaningful. And reading this reflection, taking in details we ourselves never considered, we are reminded again of why we began this program in the first place. We had three reasons for deciding to pay student workers to reflect in writing while on the job, and they are these:

- to improve communication between them and us
- to preserve a qualitative record of the space in which we work
- to use these writings in group meetings, where we treat them as case studies and works of literature

But like anyone who limits themselves to threes, we've discovered additional, unexpected reasons for committing to written reflection. Some of these are easy to quantify or justify, while others are more intangible. At times, we've noticed that the value of written reflection isn't just what information the reflections convey. It's simply, elegantly, the open-ended but focused practice itself that's worthwhile.

WRITTEN REFLECTIONS ARE NOT JUST FOR THERAPISTS AND PROFESSORS; STUDENT WORKERS CAN BENEFIT, TOO!

Early on, when we began to consider incorporating written reflection into the library work of undergraduate students, we scanned library literature to see if such

practices already existed. We wanted to find guidance on how to set up a written-reflection practice—as well as how to assess it—but our initial searches yielded nothing. We have yet to find anything directly related to what we've done. In fact, the only combination of "written reflection" and "library" we've found is in an article about MA Librarianship students in Sheffield, UK, who wrote reflections in a library management class (Greenall and Sen, 2016).

We were shocked to find so little research about the value of written reflection in librarianship and student work in libraries, and we were surprised further that when we opened our search to undergraduate-student work in general, we still found next to nothing about written reflection. The closest thing we could find is by Sykes and Dean (2013), who write about the uses of written reflection in a Work-Integrated Learning curriculum—a program in which third-year students find placement in an internship (p.186). They found that framing reflection as a "practice" rather than an "activity" brought about a shift in students' thinking that reflections can lead to real-world action (p. 190).

When we broadened our search terms to the workplace in general, we finally had some success in locating scholarship about written reflection and its uses in employment. We found articles about written reflection and corporate managers at a Fortune 500 company (Wood Daudelin, 1996), an engineer at a refinery (Rigano & Edwards, 1998), and workers at a software company (Cyboran, 2005). This research all came to the conclusion that written reflection not only improved critical thinking skills but also productivity and job satisfaction.

As we continued to review literature related to written reflection, some of its deepest pools proved to be in the fields of therapy, education, and writing composition. Written reflection, especially in the form of journaling, has been practiced in therapy and counseling for decades. Ira Progoff's (1975) *At a Journal Workshop*

is a prime example of a reflective writing process that has gone from being an anomaly to an accepted practice to an institution. Gillie Bolton's, Victoria Field's, and Kate Thompson's (2006) *Writing Works: A Resource Handbook for Therapeutic Writing Workshops and Activities* is another text that has popularized reflective writing in therapeutic contexts.

Reflection, written and otherwise, has a long history in education. One early place to start is John Dewey (1910), who in *How We Think* argued for the value of what he called "reflective thought" and defined it as follows: "Active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends, constitutes reflective thought" (p.6). What's more, for over forty years in higher education, instructors have taught written reflection in writing composition classes, where it has undergone at least three generations of changes (Yancey, 2016, p. 9). Within these generations, Expressivist pedagogy, "which employs freewriting, journal keeping, reflective writing, and small-group dialogic collaborative response" has spoken to us and is the closest design and most obvious inspiration for the work we've done (Tate, Rupiper & Schick, 2001, p. 19). In particular, within Expressivist pedagogy, we've been most drawn to Peter Elbow and bell hooks, who are "paradigmatic examples of expressivist teachers" (Tate, Rupiper & Schick, 2001, p. 20). Their research about introspective writing practices as well as the practical, radical, and self-affirming ways of using such writing served as a crucial precedent for us.

This look at literature about written reflection helped us think about what it might look like in our own space, specifically, or in the world of library science, in general. In particular, we were curious about whether or not written reflection would be an annoying, disconnected add-on to what student work-

ers were already doing or if it would actually affect their work, their attitudes about it, and the ways they imagine themselves.

STUDENT WORKERS REFLECT ON EMPLOYMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON RESEARCH COMMONS

We work in a library space—the University of Washington Research Commons—that is meant to help researchers through processes that are experimental, creative, and interdisciplinary, so in many ways it was a perfect setting for testing out a practice in written reflection that we believed was both novel and boundary spanning. As part of our work, we supervise eight undergraduate workers who staff a help desk, and in the Autumn Quarter of 2016, we began to fiddle with including written reflection in the training of new student workers. We did this by sharing a Google Doc with them, giving them time to periodically reflect in writing during their training, and reading their reflections and offering comments.

As mentioned earlier, we were aware of Peter Elbow's work, especially his book *Writing Without Teachers*, and imagined that encouraging new library workers to reflect about the Research Commons might help them track not just what they were learning in their training but how they felt about it. Outlining a reflective-writing practice, Elbow (1998) writes, "Each week, take a fresh sheet of paper and write a brief account of what you think you got out of that week's work: freewriting for class, any other writing, class reactions. These entries cannot profess to the truth. They are meant as a record of how you see things at the moment" (p. 145). In addition, we were attracted to the thinkings of theorists in Critical Pedagogy (like Paulo Freire and bell hooks), especially with regard to how they make sense of the concept of "praxis." Dealing with the term and how it relates to reflection, Freire (2012) writes, "Problem-posing education bases itself on creativity and stimulates true reflection and action upon reality, thereby responding to the vocation of persons as beings who are authentic only when engaged in inquiry and creative transformation... Education is thus constantly remade in the praxis. In order to be, it must become" (p. 84). For us, what all this means is that written reflection isn't just a mode for thinking and remembering; the act of reflecting is an action that has the potential to bring about effects that can jump off a document. Whatever is written

on a page can very much become real in a place like the Research Commons.

Below you'll find a reflection that a student wrote in their first few weeks on the job. We believe it illustrates Peter Elbow's point that reflection doesn't necessarily capture capital "T" Truth but a record of perception from moments that could otherwise be forgotten:

Working at the Research Commons has been quite like what I expected, based on the description of the job, training, and talking to other student squad members. I enjoy the pace of the position, as it allows for the luxury of reading interesting articles as well as catching up on class readings. Most student jobs do not allow this, which makes me feel grateful for it. Aside from the magically moving furniture of the space at closing and occasional lack of human interaction, there aren't many frustrations with this position (if those are frustrations at all). I've encountered some nice patrons here and there. Most are just students or faculty wishing to check out/return cords and markers, and they are usually in a rush. There were a couple people who stood out to me, however. One young man came up and decided to give me a gift certificate to the coffee shop he worked at (at the Henry) as a part of his mission of giving free cups of coffee to people who worked at libraries. Another older man came up and told me he was a new student here and wanted a small tour of the technology around here. Sometimes things like these happen, which is nice.

And though this reflection isn't really written in the spirit of Paulo Freire's problem-posing education, which jostles authors and readers into action (into praxis) via reflection, we do nevertheless think that the passage above shows someone who is in the process of becoming. This burgeoning reveals itself in the student's turning over in their mind the pros and cons of different types of student work as well as the varied interactions they had had with patrons.

We were pleased with this simple practice of having new student workers reflect in writing during their training. Their writing was helping us understand some of the questions and concerns that new people might have about working in the Research Commons, and it led us to get to know them in ways that differed from in-person interactions. We probably would have stuck with this enlightening—though limited—practice and never thought about

expanding it if we hadn't attended a presentation about High-Impact Practices (or HIPs). In this presentation, some of our colleagues at the University of Washington Tacoma Library laid out a new initiative in which they were systematically incorporating High-Impact Practices into their work and strategic plan ("UW Tacoma Library and High-Impact Educational Practices," n.d.). According to George Kuh (2008), who coined the term "High-Impact Practices," HIPs are things that "have been widely tested and have been shown to be beneficial for college students from many backgrounds" (p. 9).

They are practices like these:

- First-year seminars and experiences
- Common intellectual experiences
- Learning communities
- Writing-intensive courses
- Collaborative assignments and projects
- Undergraduate research
- Diversity/global learning
- Service learning, community-based learning
- Internships
- Capstone courses and projects (p. 9-11)

Our colleagues' work with HIPs captured our imagination and made us wonder if we should experiment with different HIPs or perhaps further develop the reflective-writing practice we had started. We began to think that all the student workers we supervise—not just the new ones in training—could benefit from the reflections and that perhaps the writing should be even more frequent and focused. With regard to the High-Impact Practice of "intensive writing courses," Kuh (2008) writes, "Students are encouraged to produce and revise various forms of writing for different audiences in different disciplines" (p. 10), so we wondered if we could push our students' reflections to be even more varied and intense. For example, we imagined that, in terms of audience, it might be beneficial for student workers to think about not only writing for us, their supervisors, but also for each other. Further, we began to think of written reflections as "Super HIPs" because we envisioned ways of connecting them to learning communities and collaborative projects.

FIRST ROUNDS OF REVAMPED REFLECTION: "WHY ARE WE DOING THIS AGAIN?"

In the Winter Quarter of 2017, we introduced a revised and revamped written-reflection practice in the Research Commons—one that all student workers would do every

quarter of the academic year. We explained this change to everyone (albeit hurriedly—more on that later...), and as we had already been doing, we shared a Google Doc with each of the eight workers, letting them know that this writing would be shared with us and no one else without their consent. We made it clear that they would get compensated for the time they put into their reflections, so we decided we would do this by covering the help desk for students for a half hour during times in which they were slated to work. That way, we wouldn't have to schedule separate times for them or ask them to do their reflections outside of their regular hours.

In this new program, we experimented with using a writing prompt. With the training reflections, we had simply asked students to write about how they were feeling or what they were thinking about, but with a new prompt, we decided to use an activity that Dr. Phyllis Moore, Chair of the Liberal Arts Department at the Kansas City Art Institute, created. When Moore provides orientation to new adjunct writing-composition instructors in what she calls "Comp Camp," she often shares a creative-writing activity that brings about unusually vivid and reflective results. It was inspired by the painter and poet Joe Brainard, who is known for having written a number of books in which every line starts with "I remember..." For example, Brainard (2012) writes lines like these:

"I remember the first drawing I remember doing. It was of a bride with a very long train" (p. 5).

"I remember corrugated ribbon that you ran across the blade of a pair of scissors and it curled up" (p. 30).

"I remember a dream of meeting a man made out of a very soft yellow cheese and when I went to shake his hand I just pulled his whole arm off" (p. 134).

The first part of Phyllis Moore's prompt is to share some of Brainard's work with students. Next, the students get some time to list quickly some "I remember..." lines of their own, and in doing this, it's important that they be as specific, detailed, and sensory focused as possible. Once the students list their lines, they pick one of them and develop it into a few paragraphs that tell a story. Finally, they examine their stories and write a few lines about what they think they mean. We were grabbed by this activity because it reminded us of some of the Expressionist writing strategies that Peter Elbow

argues for in Writing Without Teachers. For example, he says, "It's at the beginning of things that you most need to get yourself to write a lot and fast. Beginnings are hardest: the beginning of a sentence, of a paragraph, of a section, of a stanza, of a whole piece" (1989, p. 26). With the "I remember..." activity, in its first part, it's hard to get stuck because you know you're starting every line with the same two words.

And writing about getting past beginnings and into selecting something to develop, Elbow says, "Sum up this main point, this incipient center of gravity in a sentence. Write it down. It's got to stick its neck out, not just hedge or wonder" (p. 20). This advice from Elbow helped us to make sense of the second part of Phyllis Moore's prompt, where students move from listing "I remember..." lines to picking one "center of gravity" to stick with and expand.

So we took this activity and covered the help desk for half-hour spells so that the student workers could do their reflections. We recommended that they focus on their work and memories in the Research Commons, but we also said that if they had trouble getting started they could write about any experiences they deemed appropriate. If they didn't like the "I remember..." prompt, we gave them the option not to use it at all and to spend the time reflecting in writing however they wanted. The writing at the very beginning of this article is one example of how a student responded to the first part of the prompt. Here are some more "I remember..." examples from the Winter 2017 quarter, all of which are set in the Research Commons:

Student 1:

I remember craning my neck to see the slightest bit of snow through the windows in the corner.

I remember noticing my surroundings and how the RC [Research Commons] is kind of like a fish bowl. I wrote a poem about it.

Student 2:

I remember when I tried to replace a marker cartridge that was still full. Blue ink splattered everywhere, on the desk and on my hands. Luckily, it's washable.

I remember the man who wears fake glasses and glitter on his face realizing he and I both had the same favorite Twilight Zone episode. He was so excited to recommend me more "monster" shows (and later campy shows) that he wrote down the

names of 15 ones to watch, each on a different green scratch paper.

Student 3:

I remember the days when my best friend would stop by and bring me tea when I was working at the desk. The tea always had honey in it, and it would make me smile every time.

I remember when a girl asked me to close the door during a Black Lives Matter protest because it was distracting her from studying for her midterm. I said no.

When we first read these lines, we immediately felt happy that we opened up the reflective-writing practice to everyone and that we planned to do it every quarter. These "I remember..." moments, with their crisp specificity and poetics, communicated important details and emotions to us that we had been missing. We also enjoyed the experience of being surprised by student workers whom we thought we knew and surely took for granted. In their writing, they revealed funny, intimate, and surprising insights. Their gusto in responding to the writing prompt made us think of something bell hooks writes in Teaching to Transgress: "The first paradigm that shaped my pedagogy was the idea that the classroom should be an exciting place, never boring. And if boredom should prevail, then pedagogical strategies were needed that would intervene, alter, even disrupt the atmosphere" (1994, p. 7). Though we weren't bored by our workplace, we still felt that this writing brought fresh excitement and frisson to it.

But the students didn't stop with isolated lines. After completing the first part of the prompt, they continued by selecting one "I remember..." and developing it into a story. One student expanded one of the lines above into this true story:

During spring quarter of last year, there was a large Black Lives Matter protest that marched through the libraries. The protest exited the libraries through the Research Commons lobby, and they were armed with megaphones, signs and a lot of emotion. All of the students in the Research Commons stopped what they were doing, and quietly watched as the protestors marched by, except for this one girl. About five minutes into the protests exit, a girl came up to me, looked me dead in the face, and said, "Can you close the doors or something? This is too loud". I calmly replied, "I'm sorry, but you have to understand why I can't do that. It's incredibly

disrespectful, and the Research Commons is an open space, so closing the doors will make no difference". The girl then looked disgusted, and promptly retorted back with, "Black lives matter? My midterm matters more". That was the day that I realized that being in college doesn't automatically make students immune to ignorance.

I remember this story because it was so appalling. This girl showed no remorse for her words, and had such a hatred in her heart for people who were trying to peacefully make a difference. I will never forget the look on her face, and I will never forget how her words made me feel. My encounter with her made me realize that college doesn't purge a person of their ignorance and close mindedness. It made me realize that sometimes college can make a person more self-centered, whether it be the pressure of maintaining grades or making friends. This experience has made me more cautious in the way that I handle frustrated students.

When we first read the reflection above, we were excited and moved. We found it beautifully written and engaging to read, and it gave us a fresh insight into a place about which we thought we were experts. In addition, we were energized by the writing in that we believed it to be an example of what Paolo Freire would call "problem-posing education" in that the person who wrote it is clearly engaged in critical inquiry, not to mention "a constant unveiling of reality" (2012, p. 81). In the narrative, they are wrestling with what's ethical and true.

To say that we were pleased by this reflection as well as the other seven is an understatement. And to say that the students were as pleased we were, unfortunately, was not at all the case. Instead, for the students, there was mostly confusion and some frustration about this new practice. Though some of them seemed intrigued by it, others were simply tolerant or at a loss. More than once, they asked us, "Why are we doing this again?" At the outset, we had hurriedly outlined what we were doing, but at this stuck point we decided we needed to do what we should have done in the first place: carefully detail what a written-reflection practice is and why we were committing to it. We also invited comments, feedback, and questions.

To address this disconnect, we waited for our next monthly group meeting, and we gave a presentation in which we covered Critical Pedagogy, praxis, High-Impact Practices, and research about the value of

written reflection. Because we had only cursorily explained why we were committing to a written-reflection practice, we now did so explicitly. We said we saw three key benefits: to improve communication between student workers and supervisors, to maintain a qualitative record of the Research Commons, and to use reflections—with writers' permission only—in monthly group meetings as case studies and discussion starters. We spent the rest of the meeting in conversation with each other, and when we finished, everyone seemed far more accepting of the experiment.

After the meeting, we were able to settle into the written-reflection practice, and it seemed as though there was less puzzlement and more acceptance of what we were doing. A couple of quarters into this practice, we even conducted some assessment of it, and though the assessment had some weaknesses, it did nevertheless indicate that the students saw some value in reflecting while on the job.

We decided to make written reflection a solidified part of student work in the

Research Commons, and we've stuck with it to the present day. Over time, we tinkered with alterations and revisions. For example, we've tried out different prompts. The "I remember..." one proved to work well, but for the sake of variation, we tested out a modified version of Lynda Barry's "Other People's Mothers" exercise in her book *What It Is* (Barry, 2008, p. 151-154). This was our attempt:

1. *Make a list of ten powerful/strange/specific/weird/beautiful objects or people from your time at the Research Commons.*
2. *Pick one of those objects or people.*
3. *Answer some of these questions about that object or person:*
 - *Where are you in the Research Commons?*
 - *What are you doing?*
 - *Why are you there?*
 - *What time of day or night is it?*
 - *Who else is there?*
 - *What season is it?*
 - *What is in front of you? Behind you? Left? Right? Above?*
4. *Beginning with "I am," tell us what is happening. Write it like a story with details and dialogue.*
5. *If you have the time, look at what you've written and write a line or two about what it means or how it's significant to you.*

This prompt did produce results, though some of the students said it was too complicated and that a half hour wasn't enough time for them to work through all its parts.

Another prompt that we experimented with—one that was far more popular—came by way of a colleague, Anne Davis, who is a Collection Development Coordinator and Anthropology Librarian. Hearing about our written-reflection practice and amused by it, she said that a good activity might be to ask the students to periodically walk loops through the 15,000-square-foot space of the Research Commons and take notes about what they noticed. Then, later in the quarter, the students could choose one or more of their noticings and use them to catapult into reflection. This idea immediately appealed to us because it reminded us of the work of Eleanor Duckworth, a theorist and researcher in the Harvard Graduate School of Education who had challenged and inspired graduate students for decades. Duckworth had done research with Jean Piaget in the 1960s and went on to found the concept of "Critical Exploration," a process in which children question, investigate,



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hypothesize, and reflect about problems. With Critical Exploration, the most important thing is that people learn not from being told but through close observation and inquiry (Duckworth, 2006, p. 171). By requesting that students take at least three strolls through the Research Commons and ponder the question “What do you notice?” our hope was that they’d begin to assemble new statements and stories of the place in which we work and not simply take it for how it’s defined in its web pages.

As mentioned, the students enjoyed this prompt, and one of them even chose to record more than the three noticing we requested. This is that student’s account:

170411 – Hushed phone calls and rapid typing in the morning light. The trees outside the eastern windows filtered the sun into a pleasant pale green color on the carpet floor.

170413 – Someone took the welcome whiteboard in the lobby w/o me noticing again.... How does this keep happening?

170416 – Someone straightened the paintings on the north wall.

170418 – Where do things belong? The whiteboards all used to have (arbitrary) spots that they belonged in and would be reset to.

170420 – The paintings are no longer straight on the wall.....

170423 – Sometimes I see people rolling long distances across the floor in their chairs when it would be far easier to just stand up.

170425 – The temperatures is normal in the research commons. Not too cold. Not too hot. I can wear a light sweater and be comfortable for 3 hours. Incredible.

170427 – There are 41 people in the RC at 9:45am.

170430 – N/A

170502 – Sometimes people just come in here to chill. Some of our regulars are just here for an hour to be on their phones. It's nice.

170504 – I keep forgetting to mention ... whoever opens thursday is not changing the signs. Also, today I answered a reference question about bees!

These noticings are rich and varied, showing the number of stories and experiences involved in one student’s work in the Research Commons. This expanded composition came from this student’s noticings:

Reading through the above, I notice that most of my observations in regards to the research commons as a space have to do with how people interact with it. People straightening the paintings. People moving the whiteboards. People just sitting in a chair for an hour on their phones. As we sit behind the desk, there are many blind spots that hide all of these tiny interactions. First, there's the big yellow stairwell, the core of the building, that blocks any view of about half of the research commons. Then there's presentation place, which only allows the slightest glimpse of what's going on behind it's tall whiteboard walls through the small arch to the west. The screen behind the desk, although transparent, is still just opaque enough to blot out important details (plus it's behind the desk, and how often do we turn around in our chairs?). The view from the desk is really quite limited. There's the entrance, the lobby, Green B, the stairway, the green chairs to the north, and the large whiteboard tables to the south. That's it. If you move your head around a bit you can get glimpses into Green A too. In order to really see what's going on in the RC, you have to walk (or roll in your chair, but the one at the desk is a little too tall for that).

I think this raises an interesting idea about what our role is at the desk. In one meeting a while ago, I remember discussing what service we fulfill at the desk. We're a help desk. We provide information about the libraries, the RC, campus, and where the bathrooms are. We check out materials, we help patrons with technology, but we're also there to make sure patrons are using the space appropriately. Walking around as a

practice, doing so with the purpose of observing, highlights the blind spots at the desk and how much is always going on throughout the RC. I noticed people more, and I noticed their activities too, but most interestingly I noticed the traces of where people had been and what they'd been doing through the objects that were out of place. The RC is a dynamic space. In order to understand how people use it, we can look towards the space and its materials.

Writing like this is fascinating to us—not just because of the information it conveys and the channels of communication it opens. It interests us because it's part of a tradition of thinking and learning that goes back over a hundred years to, at the very least, John Dewey. Earlier in this article, we cite Dewey’s lines, “Active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends, constitutes reflective thought” (p.6). And such behavior is exactly what we see in this student worker’s writing. We see they are looking for new patterns—and questioning old ones—all with the desire to make meaning and define purpose.

PART II: EARLY ASSESSMENT

In this section we address the insights and challenges of a very early assessment that we conducted about written reflections, High-Impact Practices, and connections between student work and student lives. We began planning the assessment after several months using written reflections and conducted it about six months into the program. We did the assessment to better understand what the impact of work in the Research Commons was for our student employees; although we took a holistic look at working in the Research Commons rather than only focusing on written reflection, the assessment gave us useful information about our written reflection program.

This early assessment produced some

insights, discussed below, that allowed us to make changes to the program. As a result, we focused our student employment experiments on written reflections, rather than continuing to try to offer a wide range of HIPs. We also made some changes in how we frame and scaffold written reflection with our students. Finally, we learned from the assessment's limitations and gained clarity about the kind of further assessment we'd like to do. To more deeply understand written reflections and what they contribute to the Research Commons, we need to look at the program today and the reflections themselves—things we do in more depth in the final section of this article. We also need to reflect on how we have used pieces of reflective writing to communicate with each other, and what value we have come to take from those communications.

THE ASSESSMENT

To assess our program of written reflections, we created an interview guide that covered a lot of ground related to student employment in the Research Commons. The eight questions were very broad, soliciting student input on the bigger work-life-academics picture within which they did their work at the Research Commons. We asked questions about connections between students' work and their personal and academic lives, HIPs, and general learning in addition to written reflection. In fact, only one of the eight questions was focused solely on written reflection. The interview guide was very broad, but it did give us broad results that ultimately helped us focus our energy on written reflection going forward.

We pursued our university's IRB process, but the IRB considered the project's primary function to be assessment despite our stated plan to publish about the assessment, and so they determined it was not subject to IRB regulation. However, we nonetheless followed appropriate ethical protocol for research with regard to participant consent and identity.

We have made assessment interview participants anonymous in this article, and anything that could identify them has been removed. When we spoke with them about participating in assessment interviews, we made it clear that though they were required to do reflections for their jobs, they were not required to do interviews. Our library assessment team conducted the six twenty to thirty-minute semi-structured interviews and provided us with a written

summary of the results that included a limited number of quotes.

We have never seen a full transcript of the interviews: all we have seen is the report written by our assessment team based on those transcripts. That report contained some interview participant quotes, pulled out by our assessment team, as well as an overall analysis of themes within the results (again conducted by our assessment team). All quotes and insights in this section come from that assessment report, and we have indicated whether we are quoting an interview participant (as quoted in the report) or the report itself. We proceeded in this way to protect the students' privacy and allow them to feel comfortable sharing honestly in a context where they weren't speaking to their supervisors.

INSIGHTS

The assessment report surfaced an important benefit of reflection along with a major contradiction: the assessment team indicated that "while many students felt that the reflections supported relationship-building among colleagues, they did not see this as directly useful to their work in the Research Commons" and "although some students questioned the value of writing and discussing reflections, they expressed interest in sharing stories about their professional experiences." One student quoted in the report said, "Seeing what my peers reflected on in winter quarter was valuable. I now see the job through their eyes as well as mine." This student was referring to our early experiments in using written reflection for communication: at the point we conducted the assessment, we had held several team meetings in which we all looked at several reflections together and talked about the different ways we can handle challenging situations. The reflection about a Black Lives Matter protest in the first section of this article was one such example.

To us, as supervisors, sharing stories and relationship-building among colleagues is important and does contribute to a better Research Commons. Does this mean that the students who participated in the assessment did not see relationship-building in the same way? Did they have preconceived opinions about what their supervisors might find useful? Because we made an ethical choice not to view the interview transcripts to protect participant privacy, we can't know for certain. However, we could and did use the information we received to

experiment with improvements.

We began to focus more on reflections as communication tools for students and supervisors, and as ways for students to share their stories, experiences and impressions with each other. Something that we tried as an early experiment—sharing reflections in group meetings—has become a core part of the program. In the final section of this article, we provide some examples of how we are now using reflections in this way. We also continued to work to better scaffold and contextualize written reflection in the Research Commons, work that we began in response to student confusion early in the program.

LESSONS LEARNED

While we were able to make some changes to our program of written reflection based on our assessment results, we were somewhat limited by the structure of the assessment itself. This discussion of our limitations provides future directions for assessment, and future questions for investigation.

We limited the depth in which we could investigate written reflection by asking students a very broad range of questions that went far beyond written reflection. We asked multiple questions about HIPs and focused extensively on connecting Research Commons work to student employees' personal lives and career goals. This prevented us from focusing on how practices like reflection affect work in the Research Commons and relationships among supervisors and workers. Now that our early assessment has emphasized relationship-building as an aspect of written reflection that students particularly value, we see this as an area for potential future in-depth assessment.

Additionally, the procedures we developed to protect student privacy were important and necessary but prevented us from seeing the raw data the assessment generated. When we received the report summarizing the interviews, some things confused us, and we struggled with context. We saw inconsistencies that both baffled and intrigued us, as discussed above in the "Insights" section. Future assessment will need to continue to navigate this tension between student privacy and access to data.

After our early assessment, we were able to make changes intended to help new student workers in the Research Commons make sense of written reflection as part of their paid work. We also made changes

in response to the value students place on written reflection as a communication tool. We learned much more about the questions we still have about written reflection in student employment, and the types of future assessment of this program that could be conducted.

PART III: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Where are we today?

In these pages, we've given our reasoning for having student workers do written reflections on the job. We've shown some examples of their work, and we've gotten into some of the questions and conflicts we've encountered in introducing the practice as well as assessing it. As we write this article, though, what are things like? Where are we now? And what can other educators and library workers learn from the current landscape of our written reflection program? In the Research Commons today, written reflection gives us a tool for team communication, team-building, and personal expression, along with a record of our library space. These outcomes are related to our initial program goals listed at the beginning of this article, yet they are deeper for the assessment, learning, and changes that we undertaken over the last several years.

After conducting our assessment during the Spring Quarter of 2017, we realized we'd be hiring new student workers, and we saw this turnover as a chance to revise our job description and to make it clear to future workers that written reflection is a required and valued part of what we do. To our job description, in the "Duties" category, we added the line, "Periodically reflect in writing, sound recording, or drawing about work in the Research Commons." Now, we make sure that we define what such a duty entails in interviews and ask prospective workers what they think about it or if they have any questions or concerns. We believe that this revision has not only taken away some confusion, but also encouraged those who like to reflect to self-select.

In the job duty we cite above, we made an additional alteration. Students have the option not just to reflect in writing. They can also do so by recording their voice or drawing something—like a portrait or a comic. We made this change after speaking with Kathleen Collins, who is a colleague of ours and the Children's Literature and Sociology Librarian. When we described our written-reflection practice to her, she wondered about students who might prefer to express

themselves in different ways. She helped us see that we were preferring one mode of communication over others, so we decided to offer other modes—or potentially multimodes—in the practice. At this writing, no one has yet reflected by recording their voice or drawing or painting something, but this option is now available.

As our job descriptions and hiring practices have evolved to center written reflection, so have our team communication practices. The assessment, in which students identified communication and story-sharing among team members as a benefit, highlighted the importance of reflections as a communication tool between team members. One of the consistent joys of this program today is discussing the stories of student workers in our monthly group meetings. Above, in Part II of this article, we quoted a student in our early assessment who said "seeing what my peers reflected on in winter quarter was valuable. I now see the job through their eyes as well as mine." This statement is powerful to us, and it reflects how we now consistently use written reflections in group meetings and trainings. One memorable reflection that we talked about in a group meeting was written by a student who regularly opened the Research Commons in the morning:

As I came in to open, the library was so empty and so quiet. There wasn't any life to it. While I was doing my routine walk through, I noticed that someone else was here with me. She was the janitor. I just smiled at her, and she smiled back. The library didn't seem so empty anymore. At this point the library went from lacking life, to being full of life.

They wrote about how their relationship with that custodian evolved over the course of the quarter and how they got to know each other through early-morning conversations and shared work. They reflected on how their relationship with the custodian reminds them that we are all part of a team keeping the Research Commons clean, safe, and usable for our patrons: "while throughout the entire night the library seems so dead, [the custodian] and I bring it back to life in the mornings." They concluded by saying that they and the custodian:

See each other every morning and we are super kind to each other. I think the main reason as to why this is so significant to me is because she reminds me a bit of my parents. I can also tell she is a hard worker and I value her work ethic. She makes sure

our space is clean and she also is super sweet. I am happy that I got to meet [the custodian], and I am happy that we get to work together in the mornings to make sure that the research commons is presentable to the public.

Our discussion of this reflection reminded everyone in the meeting that we all have a role to play in keeping the Research Commons clean, orderly, and "presentable to the public" and led to people discussing how it's important to respect our colleagues on the custodial staff by doing our part of the work rather than expecting them to do everything in the morning. Some Research Commons employees never or rarely open the Research Commons, so they never encounter the custodial staff. Discussing this reflection as a group gave us all a chance to think about the fact that, while we have professional custodial services at the University of Washington, we also have a responsibility to straighten up our space so that the custodians can do their work.

Another example of how our understanding of the written-reflection program has evolved relates to our use of the accumulated record of reflections. Because we employ undergraduate workers, we have a high and regular staff turnover. Once our student workers leave, they often apply for jobs and internships, and as supervisors, we take our responsibilities as references seriously. With a catalog of a students' reflections over the course of two years, we find that we are able to write much more effective and personal letters of recommendation. In addition, when applying for work, one student even mentioned that they brought up their experiences with written reflection in an interview. They wrote this:

In the first two interviews I talked a bit about working in the libraries and how that has helped me be detail oriented and extra reliable. I mentioned those written reflections and how we collaborated as a team in creating an inviting space for students through various means.

THE INTANGIBLE

All these concrete benefits aside, written reflection doesn't always have to have an immediate, quantifiable benefit to be valuable to the Research Commons and to our team. We want to avoid entirely quantifying and commodifying the value of quarterly written reflections. While we talk about tangible benefits to the organization in this article—improved communication, team-

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building, bringing student voices into group meetings—those benefits are certainly no more important than the benefit of reflection for reflection's sake.

Students are not just pieces in the Research Commons operation machine—they are individuals who bring their lived experiences, stories, and worldviews to this space. Respecting the intrinsic value of their reflections allows us to connect on a human level and to question the linear and quantifiable nature inherent in how we often talk about our work. A reflection in which a student writes about a problem with a patron is not inherently more valuable than a reflection in which a student writes about how the plant at our help desk makes them feel. For example, one student writes:

For some reason, whenever I am stuck on a problem or pondering a thought, I tend to stare at the plant that we have at the front desk. I'm not to sure why. I like the plant. I think it's so cute and it really gives the research commons a sense of life further than the many patrons that use our services every day. Just like we take care of our patrons, we take care of our plant.

The writer of this reflection goes on to talk about how they find the plant “soothing” and concludes by saying, “In my personal opinion, I believe that at this point, the plant isn’t just a plant, it is also a part of the research commons staff.”

We never know how and when a reflection will be used or when it will be able to shed light on an unexpected situation. A reflection about a patron can be easy to apply and interact with on the surface, but it might end up providing no more than surface-level insight. The reflection about the plant could make us all look at our work environment in a new way. Or it could simply be valuable as a piece of expressive writ-

ing that helped the reader think about their relationship with the Research Commons. ■

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Click [here](#) for Appendix

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