

» “The most important asset of any library goes home at night -- the library staff.”

- TIMOTHY HEALY

Strategic Library™



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Georgia Libraries Respond to COVID-19 Pandemic

BY BETTINA ASKEW, ALICIA BROWN, MARANDA CHRISTY, ALI GOMEZ, MARQUITA GOOCH, JOSETTE KUBICKI, ASPASIA LUSTER, DANA MARSEILLE, SAMANTHA PAUL, LACHELLE SMITH, SHAFER THARRINGTON, ANGELA THORNTON, SHANNON TYNER, AND JASON WRIGHT; COMPILED BY SOFIA SLUTSKAYA

In March 2020, many public and academic libraries temporarily closed their physical facilities to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in their communities. Even though physical building and physical facilities were largely unavailable to patrons, Georgia public and academic libraries did not stop offering digital content, online learning, and virtual programs. Public and academic librarians shared stories about their programs and activities with the Georgia Library Association (GLA).

WEEDING IN LIBRARIES LACKING DATA

A Reflection

TOWARD INCLUSIVE OUTREACH

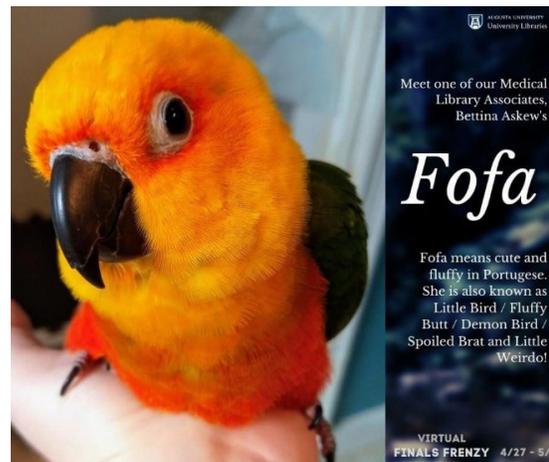
What Special Collections Can Learn from Disability Studies

SHOWCASING INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

Curating Library Exhibits to Support Scholarly Communication

AUGUSTA UNIVERSITY

Aspasia Luster, Bettina Askew, Maranda Christy, Ali Gomez, Josette Kubicki, Shafer Tharrington, and Lachelle Smith



At the end of every spring and fall semester, the Augusta University (AU) Libraries are busy providing free food, coffee, and relaxing activities to students preparing for exams. With both of our libraries—Greenblatt Library on the Health Sciences campus and Reese Library on the Summerville campus—closed for COVID-19, we were keen to find creative solutions to help students unwind and relax during

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Virtual Finals Frenzy & Wellbeing Guide

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Welcome to our Virtual Finals Frenzy & Wellbeing Guide!

We love putting together Finals Frenzy activities for you at Reese and Greenblatt Libraries - de-stressing activities to help you unwind and focus as you prepare for your finals. Since we cannot physically put events and activities on for you during this period, Spring 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are bringing it to you virtually!

We will keep this space going, and grow and change it with other ideas so that you can check into it anytime in the year. So, check out the range of tabs for ideas on how to enhance your wellness, physically and mentally, to help you be as healthy and calm as you can be for your finals and beyond.

Image by Kari Phillips from Pixabay



these stressful times. This year we hosted a Virtual Finals Frenzy (April 27–May 8, 2020) by consistently posting on our social media, which pointed to a complementary online library guide (LibGuide). This virtual programming included photos of the libraries personnel’s cooking during quarantine, a relaxing Zen Zone, and library pet therapy (always favorite!). Besides our social media posts, our LibGuide collected resources on at-home exercise and study skills for online learning to help our students get through the weirdest finals of their lives with lower stress levels and, hopefully, some smiles.

Since we were unable to offer our usual medley of nachos, pizza, assorted snacks, coffee, and tea, we converted our in-person culinary delights into a staff cooking challenge (using the libraries’ e-cookbook collection). We also featured bread and lentil soup cooking videos graciously provided by one of our university faculty members. For the Cafe section of the LibGuide we provided links to quarantine cooking themed videos on YouTube, links to resources on food facts and healthy eating, and links to popular cooking shows.

Recognizing that many students were, like us, cooped up inside without regular access to physical exercise and missing the communities offered to them by their regular gyms and fitness studios, we collected resources to help fill that void. We found local yoga studios and Zumba instructors live-streaming classes by tapping into our connections and by conducting web searches. Examples include the Georgia Aquarium’s Yoga by the Water series and the

university’s campus recreation. For students who couldn’t attend live-streaming sessions, we also collected YouTube channels with at-home workouts for individuals of all ability and fitness levels.

Traditionally, each library provides a space for students to escape and unwind during finals time. Such spaces include jigsaw and word puzzles, coloring sheets and bookmarks, origami, scrap paper for drawing, board games, and relaxing YouTube videos quietly playing in the background. We united our spaces in the webverse by having a Zen Zone section in the LibGuide. It includes links to virtual coloring sites and apps, puzzles and games sites, and soothing background music.

This semester, we expanded the Zen Zone to include links to self-care strategies, mindfulness and meditation exercises, and ASMR (autonomous sensory meridian response) videos. We sourced links from tried and tested recommendations from colleagues and by searching for open content from reputable sites.

We know that managing stress is crucial to thriving during finals. Since therapy dogs could not physically come to each of the AU Libraries, our libraries’ community decided to virtually share their fur-ever friends for students to enjoy and reduce the stress of finals. For the Pet Therapy section of the LibGuide, we uploaded photos of some AU Libraries adorable fur-ever friends, along with a description of each pet that was submitted with the photo.

While we live in a modern technological age where we rely upon the use of comput-

ers and online-based learning, it is often tricky when classes completely shift to an online-only course. Therefore, we collected several resources that assist students in this transition to fully online courses. We provided multiple links to Augusta University’s Writing Center, the Math Assistance Center, and our Academic Success Center. Similarly, we collected several YouTube videos that aim to assist the students with focusing and staying motivated, which can be very hard when suddenly required to be in front of a computer more than usual. Also, the University System of Georgia (USG) debuted its Keep Learning USG online webpage to support students with different checklists and resources to stay on top of their schoolwork.

You can visit the Augusta University’s LibGuide at <https://guides.augusta.edu/VirtualFinalsFrenzy/home>.

CLAYTON COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM

Marquita Gooch

At Clayton County Library System, we’ve implemented a number of virtual programs in response to the library’s closure and the COVID-19 pandemic. We’ve done everything from story time to DIY crafts like Slow Cooker Play Dough, and our technology Assistant Director Marquita Gooch-Voyd, hosts live Friday Funday Trivia nights on YouTube. We also have electronic e-books, audiobooks, and magazines via RB Digital. If patrons are looking to start a new business, they can scope out the competition by searching through the ReferenceUSA database. Children and teens can find new reads

USE THE LIBRARY *from home!*

READ A BOOK FOR FUN *not cancelled*

LEARN A NEW LANGUAGE *not cancelled*

RESEARCH YOUR FAMILY TREE *not cancelled*

LISTEN TO AN EAUDIOBOOK *not cancelled*

PRACTICE A NEW SKILL *not cancelled*

STREAM A MOVIE OR SHOW *not cancelled*



Virtual
STORYTIME

AVAILABLE ON IGTV & FACEBOOK
@cobbcountylibrary

MONDAY - FRIDAY at 11 AM

BILINGUAL STORYTIME ON FRIDAYS

via TumbleBooks, and the whole family can stream popular music via Freegal— all with their library card!

As an official Grow with Google partner, we have also facilitated digital skills classes virtually and are currently preparing for a series of entrepreneurship resource classes with a focus on veteran-owned businesses. We are also going to implement 60-second book reviews during the Summer Reading months and host a series called From Book to Big Screen via Netflix Party where viewers can watch the movie and simultaneously chat about it all from the comfort of their homes. Each film will be based on a popular title and screening dates will be posted to our social media sites and weekly e-newsletter.

We've begun allowing patrons back into the building with limited services offered. For our senior patrons, it's been wonder-

ful for them to be able to physically come inside our buildings and update their accounts, browse for new library materials to check out and, of course, fellowship with their favorite staff member! This pandemic has truly shown us that human interaction is definitely needed, and we value our senior patrons for their patience with us as we continue to find ways to serve them safely.

CLAYTON COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM

Dana Marseille

One program that we have done virtually is a meeting of our Graphic Novel Club. We saw this as a great opportunity to engage and stay connected to our patrons while still operating remotely from home. The meetings that took place via Google Meet were centered around the X-Men Universe and the villain/anti-heroine known as Catwoman.

Something fun and entertaining that

Clayton County librarians were doing was a program known as Friday Fun-Day Trivia. Participants were able to view the stream on Google Meet from one device. They then had to go to the Kahoot website (kahoot.it) on a separate device to answer the trivia questions. This was a great opportunity to get everyone in the family involved and was a good way to relieve some stress during these unprecedented times.

All of Clayton County Library virtual events are advertised on our social media as well as in our e-newsletter that is sent out weekly. Check out our Instagram page at <https://www.instagram.com/claytongalib/> to see additional scheduled virtual programs.

COBB COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM

Shannon Tyner

Our library system here in Cobb used social media to push our digital and online re-

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sources. The day we got word that we would be closing to the public, we created our Use the Library from Home! initiative. It included graphics to share on social media, a dedicated page on our website, and an article that was pushed out to our subscribers. Use the Library from Home! promotes:

- Digital resources for all ages including e-books, e-audiobooks, digital magazines and newspapers, and streaming video.
- Online databases including Lynda, Mango Languages, Gale Courses, and LearningExpress Library.
- The Library PASS program. Library PASS is a partnership between us and Cobb County and Marietta City Schools in which all students can use their student number as a public library card.
- TutorATL. TutorATL provides on-demand, one-on-one tutoring services for free with a library card or Library PASS.
- The Early Learning page, which includes booklists and “storytime favorites” (nursery songs and fingerplays) videos for ages 0–5.

Cobb librarians have been posting Virtual Storytimes to Facebook and IGTV every weekday and plan to continue until our regular programs resume.

Since students were not able to go anywhere for spring break, we’ve created a Spring Break at Home series for social

media. Each weekday, we shared an activity (one for school age, one for tweens and teens) for students to do at home.

DEKALB COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Alicia Brown

DeKalb County Public Library (DCPL) received the 2018 Georgia Public Library of the Year award for programming that embraced the county’s diverse community. This was evident through programs such as PRIME TIME Preschool, Fine Free Summer and the Human Library Project. However, during the current health pandemic known as COVID-19, DCPL had to come up with ways to continue to provide outstanding service to its patrons that are temporarily not able to visit the branches.

“We are turning lemons into lemonade” said Jonathon Myers, principle librarian at Hairston Crossing Library. Staff members at DCPL have been working together to provide fun and interactive programs that the whole family can enjoy while being at home. The DeKalb Library Foundation is providing funding to support some of these offerings created by outside performers. Patrons have been able to watch live story times, DIY craft videos, magic shows, and more from the library’s Facebook page. Not only have these programs helped to keep patrons engaged, it also gives them an opportunity to connect with their local librarian virtually. “Should

we pack our swimsuit?” one patron asked on the Facebook post about DCPL’s Explore More virtual spring break activities.

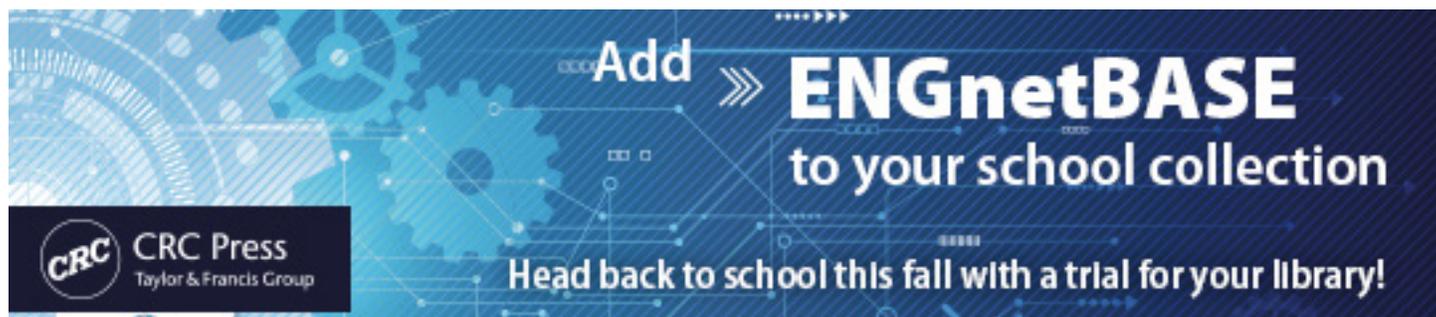
DCPL has also made it easy to obtain a temporary digital library card through their website or renew a current card to be able to checkout e-books, e-audio books, and more. During the temporary closure, patrons will not incur overdue fines. DCPL also is allowing patrons who checked out mobile hotspots to keep the devices until we reopen.

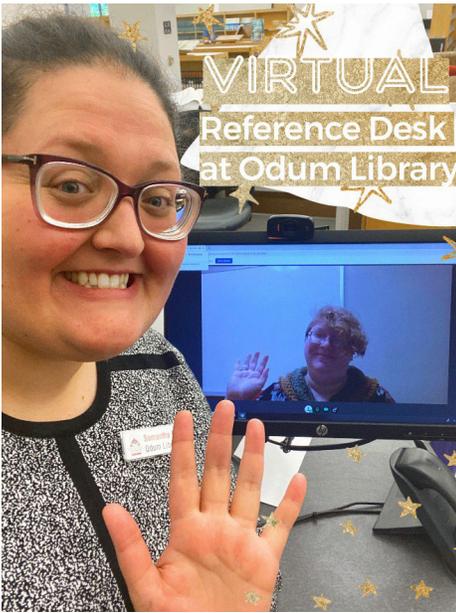
Partnerships have also been an integral part of the pandemic. DCPL is partnering with the American Red Cross to host several blood drives at various branches to help alleviate critical supply shortages. Although it has been a challenge to come up with ways to connect with patrons across DeKalb County during this difficult time, it has also been rewarding. This new normal has caused many staff members to think outside the box, thus developing programs that will more than likely become staples from now on. The Library’s motto is “Read more. Think more. Play more. Make more. Get more.” Patrons are doing just that through the efforts of DeKalb County Public Library.

GEORGIA TECH

Jason Wright

In response to the COVID-19 quarantine and subsequent shutdown of campus, the Geor-





gia Tech Library adopted several online and in-person strategies to bring high-quality services and instruction to students, staff, and faculty.

Numerically, the most impactful has been moving all library-led workshops online. The library offers 20–30 classes a month in everything from data visualization, to multimedia instruction, to reference management. Typically, instructors see a maximum of 25 students per in-person workshop for subjects like Introduction to R Studio or Introduction to Python. However, since moving online, the cap for students has been lifted. Instructors are seeing more than 100 students per workshop.

A social media series featuring librarians introducing students and faculty to their favorite resources, plus those resources that have recently been expanded in response to the quarantine, is another innovation. The videos are posted on the library Instagram page. The resources include Overdrive, Red Shelf, Bloomsbury Databases, Films on Demand, and others, each two times a week.

In the early days of the quarantine, the library began loaning laptops to students in need so they could have the equipment to attend online classes. Faculty and

staff expanded the program by using the inventory of lending laptops, plus Surface Pros earmarked for staff use. The program includes cleaning the machines and mailing them to students.

VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY ODUM LIBRARY

Samantha Paul

At Valdosta State University's (VSU) Odum Library, we used the extended spring break to identify ways that we could operate an essential campus component (and socialization hub) in a way that could reduce risk for students, faculty, and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Library staff worked on signage, reducing the capacity of our computer labs to facilitate social distancing, and removing extraneous shared spaces, like study rooms and additional computer labs. During these preparations, we realized that our traditional reference desk would make it difficult to maintain a 6-foot distance while assisting students at the reference desk. We were able to take advantage of our existing dual monitor setup and a web camera to create a virtual reference desk. This virtual reference desk was a group effort. The reference librarians were able to borrow a webcam from our New Media Center and collaborate with our library systems services coordinator to create a generic computer login that would have sufficient system privileges to support a webcam. It took two days to hammer out the logistics, but we are pleased with how it is working so far. This new virtual reference desk setup has been well-received by visitors to the building and has allowed us to provide research assistance beyond chat and phone.

WEST GEORGIA REGIONAL LIBRARY SYSTEM

Angela Thornton

West Georgia Regional Library System (WGRLS) has been doing a variety of things in our WGRLS locations to keep interacting with our patrons during quarantine and social distancing. First, we've added a lot

of content to our CloudLibrary selections as many libraries have. People are really responding to that. Second, we've been on a learning curve to implement more interactive online programming. We've been conducting Facebook Live storyline, of course, but we've also been posting "how to" videos on things like crafts, art, or cooking.

We've also had interactive sessions on FB Live for chats with library managers or teen tech talk sessions or Bingo with adults or book clubs.

Third, we're looking ahead to changes we may want to make in future programming for all ages through virtual and online resources to retain some of our patrons who are finding these online interactions preferable to always having to come to one of our locations. It's been eye-opening for us all! ■

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Weeding in Libraries

Lacking Data » A Reflection

BY AIMEE MILES

I came into my school library a year and a half ago and quickly found that I was in a library with minimal data. I am the only library worker in my elementary school library. In order to make sense of the chaos, my first plan was to conduct an information audit and see what kind of school library I found myself running.

The library had been run by nonlibrarians in the years before I was hired. They worked at a time when the library was under threat from a director who wanted to get rid of the library. Specific challenges included: no current inventory, little collection development, and no weeding, as well as little family engagement with missing items. Invented call numbers meant that even if my data was current, the software couldn't read them. Additionally, the library's software, Follett Destiny, had not even been kept up-to-date.

It took months to begin to untangle all the various issues. A tunnel through the firewall was made so that my software could update automatically. I added emails so that I could notify families about their children's checkout materials, and therefore request replacements for lost materials. I began laying the groundwork with my students about the importance of checking out books before carrying them out of the library. At the end of year, I inventoried the library myself, putting my hands on all 8,000 books in my collection. In the summer, I had an iSchool grad student come in to fix the issue of fabricated call numbers.

I started the weeding process by getting rid of the most extreme examples of unsuitable materials for this unmaintained collection. I ran circulation reports on books that hadn't been checked out in 10 years and pulled those off the shelves. Without time or better data to employ, I brought out ALA's M.U.S.T.I.E. to pare down the collection into something usable for the students.¹ Though I did not have good collection data for my library, I had good weeding data and



Top: Before the Big Weed. Above: During the Big Weed

reduced my collection by 1,600 books that were misleading, out-of-date, of no interest to my users, irrelevant to the needs of my

users, and available elsewhere, especially at-home. After taking this step to weed over one-eighth of the collection, it is now less



After the Big Weed.

time-consuming to maintain the collection through regular weeding maintenance.

The library software still doesn't run a full-data analysis through Destiny. I would need to pay Destiny for further records in order to use their data analyzing software, so my collection development has had to make due with my own data generation and analysis. Among other things, I can use the catalog to generate data about circulation, average age of sections in the library, and create lists of books that haven't been checked out in 10 or more years. It's a little slower and not as visual, but it still gives me data to work with.

As part of my collection development plan for the library, I want a diversified collection that will prepare my students to see themselves, as well as people they may not have encountered yet.² As part of this plan, I make a count of the books I'm bringing in that are by people of color. I tally my selections when placing an order for new books, aiming to get close to half authors of color. While quotas aren't necessarily the best way to go, I've found that without keeping count to see where I'm putting my time and money, diversifying my collection would not happen in the quantities it needs to make a difference.

For me, a good collection is a mixture

of data and trained instinct. It is harder to make this work in certain areas of the collection, such as children's non-fiction, but it's always worth trying. I want to make sure that I'm putting my budget toward supporting underrepresented publications and that I am making well-done stories and utilizing materials about a variety of peoples. I built the habit of being more aware of the authors' identities while writing for Book Riot. I do this in my personal life as well. I find this practice to be invaluable for mirroring my subconscious with the software data.

My last word on the importance of data in libraries is on how much administrators love good data. In running my circulation numbers at the end of my first year, I could demonstrate to my supervisors the value of having a trained librarian in the school library. Circulation had doubled in my first year from each of the previous years without a librarian. My boss mentioned it publically to the rest of the staff and my budget doubled for my second year in the library. So: keep track of data that demonstrates your own value and proudly share it with bosses. While I don't expect to double circulation every year, hard data confirmed to my supervisors that the library and I are actively serving the students, and that we deserve money to do the library work. ■

FOOTNOTES:

- 1 "Collection Maintenance and Weeding," American Library Association Office for Intellectual Freedom, 2018, <http://www.ala.org/tools/challengesupport/selectionpolicytoolkit/weeding>.
- 2 Rudine Sims Bishop, "Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors," *Perspectives* 1, no. 3 (1990), ix-xi; Uma Krishnaswami, "Why Stop At Windows and Mirrors? Children's Book Prisms", The Horn Book, Inc., accessed February 29th, 2020, <https://www.hbook.com/?detailStory=why-stop-at-windows-and-mirrors-childrensbook-prisms>.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Aimee Miles is the school librarian at a private elementary school in Seattle, WA. She graduated from UW iSchool in 2017, is the mom of two book-obsessed kids, and she sometimes writes about books around the internet. When not reading or cleaning the house, she likes to eat vegan doughnuts and watch rugby.

Toward Inclusive Outreach

» What Special Collections Can Learn from Disability Studies

BY KEVIN M. O’SULLIVAN AND GIA ALEXANDER

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 19 percent of undergraduates and nearly 12 percent of postbaccalaureate students in the United States during the 2015–2016 academic year reported having a disability.¹ This is a dramatic increase over data from the previous decade, which reported just 11 percent of undergraduates and 6 percent of postbaccalaureate students in the same category in 2003–2004.² With these statistics in mind, educators and special collections practitioners are confronted with difficult questions: What are we doing to effectively meet the needs of nearly one in five of the undergraduates who sit in our classrooms?³ What can we do to ensure they receive the accessible educational experience in our institutions that they deserve? While there has been a notable expansion in the critical conversation surrounding accessibility and inclusion since the emergence of disability studies in the late twentieth century, voices from the area of special collections have been largely silent.⁴ This article seeks to address this gap in the professional literature. We will begin by briefly outlining the emergence of the Disability Rights Movement and its relationship to institutional libraries, highlighting in particular where we see opportunities for improving outreach to populations that have special access needs. We will then offer strategies for building a program of accessible outreach for special collections libraries, such as locating and partnering with key stakeholders, designing flexible instruction modules, and assessing outreach activities. Finally, we will conclude with some thoughts on the value of accessibility to the mission of special collections. Ultimately,



instituting a programmatic approach, such as the one we will advocate here, aligns with the professional ethics of the field and improves the quality of the special collections experience for all of our many diverse patron groups.

LIBRARIES AND THE DISABILITY RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Before considering how special collections practitioners might best adapt their outreach strategies to accommodate a range of abilities, it is essential to first understand the rise of the Disability Rights Movement and its influence on our understanding of how disability is socially constructed. In the United States, public awareness of the rights of people with disabilities arose early in the twentieth century when the responsibility to meet their needs transferred from the family to the federal government. In response to the thousands of military personnel returning from World War I with significant and permanent injuries, new services for veterans and the resulting medical model of disability situated the problem of disability within the “broken body” of the individual.⁵ This approach sought to rectify disability with often futile “cures” (for instance, lobotomy for mental illness) and to segregate individuals with disabilities in special care homes, hospitals, and asylums.⁶

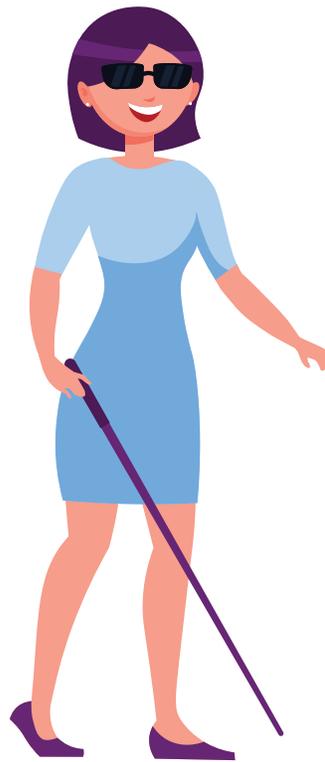
As Gareth Williams noted, the medical model was “fundamentally positivist in its orientation to the world,” prioritizing scientific data over the experience of the individual.⁷ Because of this narrow scientific focus, the medical model overlooked the impact of external factors that had the effect of disabling citizens. For example, prior to the ADA, there existed a widespread lack of ramps, curb cuts, or elevators that prevented those benefiting from a wheelchair from making full use of it. Nevertheless, the medical model remained the dominant framework for understanding disability until the advent of the Disability Rights Movement, which emerged in parallel to other social movements such as the Civil Rights Movement and the Women’s Movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

In 1962, Ed Roberts made history by becoming the first student who required the use of a wheelchair to gain admission to the University of California, Berkeley. Throughout his academic career, Roberts challenged the medical model of disability as well as the academic and civic authorities around him. This activism progressed beyond the edges of his university campus, catalyzing early disability rights legislation for public colleges and universities around the country. Some 20 years before the ADA, Roberts’s advocacy led directly to the

establishment of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, an early mandate for accessibility at public institutions of higher learning, and to the federal Rehabilitation Services Agency (RSA) in 1974. As a result of the far-reaching effects of his advocacy efforts, Roberts is regarded by many as the “father” of the Disability Rights Movement in the United States.

Another dramatic shift in how we think about disability arrived with the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities, and Handicaps (ICIDH), which was published by the World Health Organization in 1980. With this document, the conception of disability progressed from an anatomico-pathological diagnosis to a “broader spectrum of personal and social needs [that] provided the basis for a much more realistic assessment of the prevalence for disability and an argument for increases and shifts in forms of provision.”⁸ In other words, following this social model, disability is construed not by some localized physiological condition, but the lived reality of a person as they navigate the institutional and societal relationships around them. In the social model, disability is not considered a condition that exists by virtue of one’s abilities (or limits thereof). Rather, it is a construct that is imposed upon a person by the institutions around them that do not meet their basic needs.

Amid these broader shifts in thinking about the social construction of disability, progressive legislation continued to enact real change across the United States, particularly in the realm of education. Historically, access to an equal education was withheld from individuals with disabilities. And while progressive voices emerged across Europe and the United States at the turn of the twentieth century calling for integrated education for affected students, as late as the early 1970s, children who were born deaf or hard-of-hearing, or blind or with significant visual impairments, were segregated and educated at special state schools with other children having the same disability.⁹ As has been amply demonstrated throughout history, once ensured and protected, education may be the means by which marginalized groups are able to improve their station, gain independence, and live more fulfilling lives. Quickly following the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 came the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, which required all public schools that accepted federal fund-



ing to also provide equal access to education for students with disabilities. This legislation was amended and updated in 1990, when it was passed as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

The momentum of the Disability Rights Movement also led to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (amended 2009), which legally mandates accessibility to almost all public places, including libraries, and by extension their materials, including special collections. Public libraries, for example, provide accessibility to their physical locations via ramps, elevators, and specially constructed restrooms. But they must also make efforts to provide materials in alternative formats, such as Braille or audio. In the wake of this legislation, many libraries housed in historic buildings have struggled with accessibility issues, which often require costly renovations.¹⁰ Technically, some exceptions are permitted in the law regarding accessibility of historical sites. However, both patron engagement and public image stand to suffer for institutions that neglect to update their facilities. Fortunately, many special collections libraries have led with dramatic change. In 2019, for example, the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC, announced plans for a major building project. Among the stated purposes driving this effort is increased accessibility to both facilities and materials.¹¹ While the building is being made more usable, ongoing work

to digitize the library’s collections will mean that primary source materials can be more easily rendered in alternative formats, such as enlargement, audio, or Braille output, when requested. Although accessibility laws mark significant achievements, they are really just the beginning—a set of standards that must be met but that offer little guidance on how to achieve compliance. To best align with the ethics of our field, we would submit that special collections practitioners must extend these efforts beyond the minimum set by the legal mandate and strive for broader community engagement through a program of inclusive outreach.

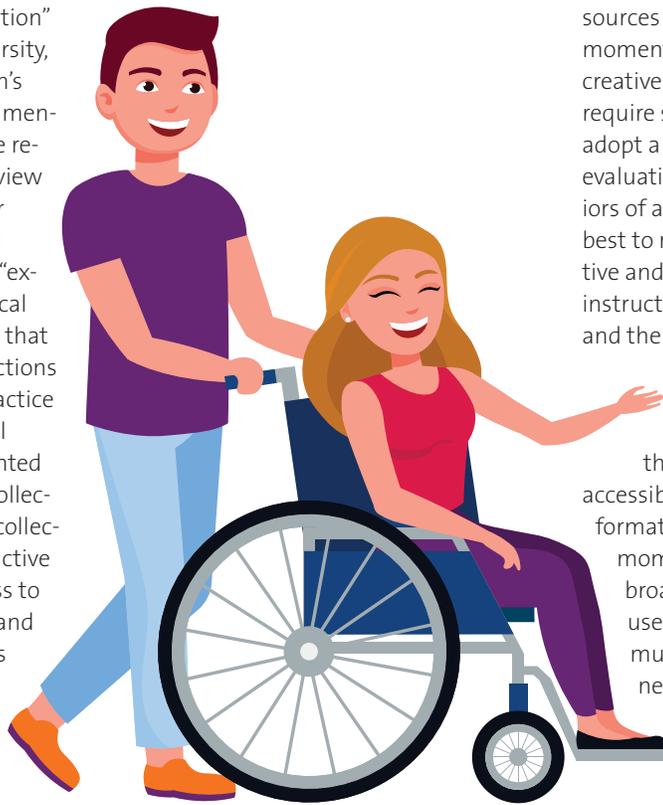
Within the context of an academic library, many first forays into accessibility include making buildings and their contents more accessible and adjusting instructional practices to accommodate students with disabilities.¹² However, we also have the opportunity to enact what Allison P. Hobgood describes as “radical institutional change,” through which members of the academic community learn to preemptively account for physical and mental differences in their classrooms.¹³ If access to education is a human right, it follows that it is our ethical duty as information professionals to offer equal access to these opportunities to all members of our campus communities who wish to partake. We are left then with the difficult question of whether we are doing enough to account for the full spectrum of ability among our students and patrons.

In much the way that a social movement may begin with a single assertion of individual rights, the kind of radical institutional change Hobgood asks us to consider may begin with conversations among professionals in the field. We are fortunate to be in a time when such difficult dialogues related to matters of diversity are proceeding among those working in special collections. In 2018, the RBMS conference was devoted to the idea of “convergence.” Among the stated ambitions of the program was to illuminate “our readiness for the inclusion of different people and cultures in what we collect, how we perform outreach and programming, and who we select to staff and lead our repositories.”¹⁴ While many important and thought-provoking topics were introduced, close scrutiny of the conference program reveals no papers or panels speaking to services for persons with disabilities. Similarly, despite the explicit mention of encouraging participation of people of any physical ability and the desire

to reach “the broadest possible population” in the RBMS Statement on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, the charge of the section’s Diversity Committee makes no similar mention of patrons with disabilities.¹⁵ More recently, a task force was convened to review and amend the ACRL Code of Ethics for Special Collections Librarians. Included in the formal charge to the group was “expanding the scope of professional ethical duties therein described, and ensuring that the document empowers special collections professionals to incorporate ethical practice into their organizational and individual work.”¹⁶ One of the core values highlighted in this revised document pertains to Collection Access and Accessibility: “Special collections practitioners demonstrate a proactive commitment to broad, equitable access to all materials under their stewardship, and constantly strive to improve collections access for all users.”¹⁷ Significantly, the commentary supporting this core value explicitly calls for access policies that attend to the needs of patrons with disabilities. The area of Outreach, Reference, Instruction, and Exhibitions touches upon a similar motif, encouraging practitioners to “forge connections between collections and as diverse a community of users as possible, striving to find points of relevance that foster engagement at a multitude of levels.”¹⁸ The commentary here calls for equitable treatment of all patrons served by the collections.

The ongoing dialogue surrounding equality and diversity among practitioners and audiences of special collections is essential to the growth and sustainability of the field. While the updated Code of Ethics marks significant progress, it is clear that there remains a critical lack of awareness regarding the needs of persons with disabilities among special collections practitioners, particularly in the area of outreach and instruction. It is our hope that, by drawing attention to these issues in the present argument, we can begin a vital, if difficult, dialogue that expands these ongoing efforts to improve diversity and together work toward extending services to all of our campus and community constituents. We will turn now to a consideration of steps that might be taken to make special collections outreach more accessible to persons with disabilities.

Building a Program of Accessible Outreach in Special Collections Classroom instruction is an increasingly salient way for special collections institutions to demon-



strate value to campus communities.¹⁹ A 2010 study analyzing forms of engagement by special collections practitioners conducted by the Association of Research Libraries revealed that 100 percent of respondents took part in curricular outreach, suggesting that this is now an essential function of our field.²⁰ If we do our jobs well, the experience of special collections will be unlike anything else a student encounters during their education. Such instruction can play an integral role in the formation of what has been described as archival intelligence or artifactual literacy by building strong research skills in the location, use, and interpretation of primary source material.²¹ Beyond this, exposure to special collections can have a deep, personal effect on students with the potential to inspire lifelong learning. Magia G. Krause demonstrated that a hands-on, active learning approach forges powerful connections in a student’s mind by inviting them to develop their own critical interpretation of the historical materials they handle. This experience offers “a sense of empowerment ... from seeing something new in the process of conducting original research.”²² As more practitioners and faculty partner toward such active learning experiences in the special collections classroom, the importance of an unmediated, first-hand engagement with primary

sources cannot be overstated. Classroom moments such as these are the result of creative thinking and careful planning. They require special collections practitioners to adopt a user-centered approach by critically evaluating the information-seeking behaviors of an audience before determining how best to reach them.²³ It also requires an active and engaged dialogue with the course instructor(s) to define learning outcomes and the willingness to employ new strategies to most effectively achieve them. These same strategies may be readily applied toward the goal of developing more widely accessible instruction, ensuring that these formative special collections classroom moments are indeed available to the broadest possible population. Like any user-centered approach, such efforts must begin by understanding the needs of one’s audience.

As we now understand it, both disability and disability identity exist as separate spectra, with each affected individual possessing their own unique experience of the world around them. For instance, vision impairment exists on a spectrum ranging from affected individuals who have no usable residual vision whatsoever to those who can read regular print with basic magnification. Besides these individuals, there are also those who experience difficulties that may not be formally recognized as disabilities, such as an older patron whose sight has diminished with age and who would benefit from the use of magnifying aids. Because of this wide range of access needs, a special collections practitioner may have three students with vision impairments in one class, each of whom requires a unique accessibility modification or accommodation, just as each experiences the classroom in their own way. Here we must make an important distinction between accessibility and accommodation. By accessibility, we mean applying forethought in designing inclusive experiences for library patrons. An accommodation (as in a Reasonable Accommodation mandated by the ADA) is a retrofit to our approach that we implement in response to perceiving a need or receiving a formal request. When providing an accommodation, the instructor must not presume the nuances of a condition, how it affects a student’s work or experience of collections materials, nor what accommodations they will require. Furthermore, Anjali

J. Forber-Pratt and Steven R. Aragon argue that the degree to which a person identifies as having a disability and their willingness to ask for and/or accept help also follow a spectrum.²⁴ Some individuals deny disability altogether, while others regard their disability as intrinsic to their sense of self. One step in learning to live with a disability involves situating oneself somewhere along these spectra. Therefore, where a student is in this process—their level of comfort with disability, disclosure, and asking for help—may influence the type of support they need as well as how they request it. This means by extension that there are also students who would benefit from accommodations but are not yet in a position to request them. Entry into campus life may be the first opportunity some people with disabilities have to be among a large community of peers with the resources to support them. A better understanding of their needs and the accessibility affordances and accommodations available will continue to evolve, as do their studies and participation in campus activities.²⁵ Therefore, it is advisable to revisit conversations with individuals and inquire about whether there are any accommodations that would aid their success.

Here, some readers might argue that a universal design approach may be helpful to those individuals with disabilities who are uncomfortable asking for help, or unaware that they need it. Universal design began as a movement within the discipline of architecture to make buildings as accessible as possible to as many people as possible, regardless of their means of mobility (such as level entrances with no steps, automatic doors, and adequate elevators). The idea has since spread to other disciplines, including education, where instructors are tasked with designing learning activities that strive to be universally accessible. In an instructional video, for example, developers might take care to omit any features such as flashing lights that could potentially cause viewers to have seizures, add descriptive audio for users who have visual impairments, or add closed-captioning and transcription to accommodate users who have hearing disabilities. However, as Rick Godden and Jonathan Hsy pointed out, the notion of universal design comes with many “discontents,” first among them being the idea that any design can be truly universal.²⁶ As special collections practitioners, we are duty-bound to take steps to ensure our collections are available and usable to



the broadest audience possible. Critics of universal design caution that the loftiness of such a goal may preempt an individual's ability to express their unique needs and thus preclude them from a more suitable, customized experience.

This critique of universal design again underscores the essential nature of communication among students, instructors, and special collections practitioners. Maintaining open channels of communication is essential to the success of designing a program of accessible outreach. On the individual scale, such feedback may arrive via an institution's ongoing assessment activities.²⁷ However, one must attend to the privacy of the individual by arranging for such feedback to be related by some mechanism that does not force them to declare themselves as having a disability before their peers.

Such feedback may begin as affective assessments (How did the individual respond to the instruction?) before proceeding to cognitive assessments (What did they learn?). As a program of accessible outreach gains a larger constituency, there may also be the opportunity for similar feedback on an institutional scale.

Valerie Harris and Ann C. Weller have argued that outreach activities provide special collections practitioners the op-

portunity to serve as “ambassadors for their institutions.”²⁸ There are obvious benefits to holding such a role on campus, such as greater visibility throughout the community, increased and more meaningful usage by patrons, and potentially gaining access to new opportunities for collections and external funding.²⁹ Besides these, however, adopting such a role also opens the possibility for making new connections among underserved communities and upholding our professional ethics to provide equal access to education. Similar to a user-centered approach to instruction, the foundation for a successful ambassadorship is set by fostering new relationships built upon mutual respect and trust. This, in turn, relies upon open and continuous lines of communication in formal assessment surveys as well as informal feedback, which may then be analyzed and adopted.

Such an approach works particularly well for improving the experience of existing patrons of special collections. But how can one improve outreach for the previously underserved communities who are not yet among our user base? Valerie Harris suggested that, by listening to current patrons, we may promote a positive culture that then attracts new audiences.³⁰ To reach the broadest possible population, however, we would recommend a more proactive approach be adopted to complement the one Harris suggests, one that offers such potential audiences the same opportunity for agency and feedback toward the improvement of special collections outreach. In the wake of landmark achievements like the ADA, and with the corresponding increase of awareness around disability issues in the public sphere, many campuses now have offices devoted to providing services for members of the campus community who have disabilities. Reaching out to colleagues in these units would be a logical first step toward learning more about the resources an institution offers for people with disabilities and thus begin a conversation about how the library may better serve them. To solicit such feedback, practitioners (and, ideally, administrators as well) might conduct a listening tour or host a town hall-style conversation for campus constituents. One might also consider forming an advisory committee comprising representatives from interested groups. This latter approach has the benefit of promoting an ongoing conversation and building in some level of accountability toward positive

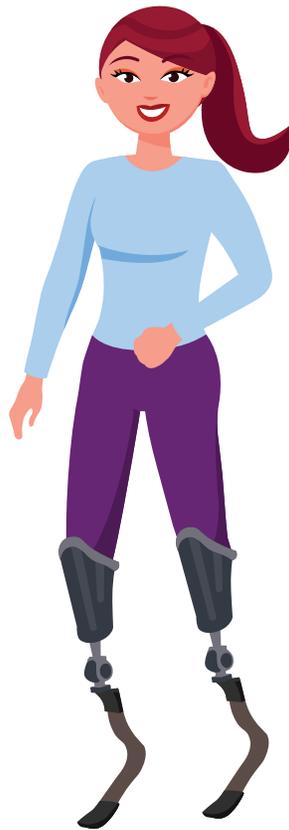
change. Underlying any approach is initiating communication with new stakeholders, offering them the opportunity to have a voice, and investing them in the work of special collections.

TWO CASE STUDIES

While the work of Ed Roberts and others led to greater community inclusion for many people with disabilities, controversy persists over how such involvement should be enacted. From the mid-1970s through the end of the twentieth century, well-meaning nonprofit entities, municipalities, and service providers sought to establish guidelines to manage the tide of people transitioning from institutions to communities. This led to a backlash against what was seen as prescriptiveness and undue limitation of personal freedoms for those with disabilities. As we have discussed previously, opponents of the broad, “one size fits all” approach advocated by universal design theorists cite its inability to accommodate or validate the needs, autonomy, and dignity of the individual. Thus, at the turn of the present century, the “Nothing About Us Without Us” movement took hold, calling for the involvement of people with disabilities in decisions regarding their care and experiences.³¹ With all of this in mind, it may seem counterproductive to offer prescriptive examples of what inclusive outreach is or ought to be. As opposed to providing templates for accessible instruction, it is our intention that the case studies below serve as models to demonstrate how this type of work operates in practice. We recognize that the inclusion of such personal accounts can prove useful in sparking ideas, building confidence, and further advocating for action. It is our hope that others will take up this mantle and contribute their own successes and failures in implementing programs of inclusive outreach to a growing body of critical work supporting this issue.

Case Study 1: Incorporating a Bibliographical Teaching Collection

Geoffrey Whitney wrote, in *A Choice of Emblems*, “*Usus libri, non lectio prudentes facit*”—It is the use of books, not simply the reading of them, that makes us wise.³² Thus, we are reminded that there is more to be achieved from sustained interaction with historical materials than the production of scholarly articles and monographs. Indeed, as special collections practitioners deepen relationships with a growing range of audi-



ences, more ineffable benefits such as wonder, delight, and curiosity are recounted as qualitative indicators of meaningful impact. However, such experiences remain inaccessible to many who would benefit from and appreciate them. The professional best practices that guide how access is provided to researching patrons are vital to maintaining the security and preservation of our special collections material. By design, however, they also limit the varieties of outreach available for such valuable items. In the spirit of a user-centered approach, this case study demonstrates how a special collections practitioner might use a bibliographical teaching collection to offer innovative instruction that is adaptable to the specific needs of the audience.

A bibliographical teaching collection is made up of items that hold intrinsic artifactual value but do not possess significant monetary value, rarity, or scarcity and for which there is no commitment to long-term preservation. As a complement to the items we acquire and maintain within the secure stacks of our special collections libraries, such materials can serve as a powerful vehicle for introducing the world of rare books and manuscripts to diverse audiences outside the traditional boundaries of the reading room.³³ Among the many benefits of adopting this approach are greater flexibility

in outreach venues and the opportunity to reach a broader range of learning styles.

Since special collections materials are typically not permitted to leave the premises, a practitioner’s audience must come to the library to receive hands-on instruction. Generally, this is seen as a good thing, as it brings students into special collections and introduces them to the resources available to them there. However, there are those in our community who are not able to travel to the library, whether due to a mobility issue or inaccessible facilities. For example, senior living communities often maintain a busy schedule of programs and events for the benefit of their residents. However, many who would enjoy engaging with the historical riches of special collections may be prevented from navigating to the library on a large college campus to take a tour. Through the use of a bibliographical teaching collection, it is possible to bring the experience of special collections to the audience, meeting them where they feel most safe and comfortable.

Such an approach also affords flexibility in the form of instruction. Each person possesses their own preferred learning style, which has been formed by a complex of biological and developmental factors over the course of their education.³⁴ By attending to such factors as instructional environment, the need for movement, or preferences around collaborative or individual learning experiences, an instructor can design an experience that is responsive to the needs of the audience. In particular, there are many for whom touch is an integral facet of the learning process. While one would not wish to promote the active destruction of a teaching resource, the materials composing a bibliographical teaching collection are not intended to be preserved in perpetuity, and thus there is less concern surrounding the manner in which they are handled. This opens up a wide range of possibilities for tactile learners who require more sensation than is typically permissible in a special collections reading room. Moreover, the possibilities for tactile learning with a bibliographical teaching collection are further enhanced by the intrinsic nature of the materials that comprise it, which often come to the collection by virtue of their already being in moderate disrepair. Thus, with their sewing exposed or their plates detached, these items greatly reward a natural curiosity for physical materiality.

Highlighted in this brief case study are

» **But what if it is in fact not easy to gain access to books one needs for one's research? For many scholars with disabilities, meaningful access to valuable collections materials is possible only through the use of assistive devices, such as digital magnification technology.**

just two benefits of augmenting a special collections outreach program with a bibliographical teaching collection. However, as is generally the case in designing more accessible instruction, the beneficiaries of this approach are many more than persons with a disability. Having the flexibility to offer special collections-themed outreach outside the library will open new possibilities for events at K–12 schools, community centers, regional meetings, and promotional events around campus. And, with the ability to offer such hands-on interactions to more and different audiences, these outreach initiatives nevertheless instill wonder through a personal connection with historical materials.

Case Study 2: Research-based Instructional Exercises

Francesco Petrarch is often quoted as saying of his books:

I have friends, whose society is extremely agreeable to me: they are of all ages, and of every country. They have distinguished themselves both in the cabinet and in the field, and obtained high honors for their knowledge of the sciences. It is easy to gain access to them; for they are always at my service, and I admit them to my company, and dismiss them from it, whenever I please.³⁵

But what if it is in fact not easy to gain access to books one needs for one's research? For many scholars with disabilities, meaningful access to valuable collections materials is possible only through the use of assistive devices, such as digital magnification technology. The same is true for students with disabilities, who come to special collections with the intention of honing the methodological skills that will serve them for the rest of their careers. This case study offers some reflections on how practitioners may design practice-based instructional exercises in the service of research methods training that are tailored to the specific needs of new scholars with disabilities.

As is the case for advanced scholars with disabilities who visit our reading rooms, open dialogue is the most effective tool for understanding the needs of individual students with disabilities. Under the law, it is the responsibility of the individual with a disability to initiate that dialogue by self-disclosing their access needs and requesting specific accommodations. Typically, scholars with disabilities accomplish this task in their advance correspondence with training facilitators, a standard step in registering for such an event. If possible, scholars with disabilities often benefit from an advance visit to the facility, whether in person or by remote communication. In a preliminary meeting, a student with a disability will have the opportunity to bring and demonstrate any assistive technology they might anticipate using during the training event. In so doing, individualized procedures can be worked out in advance that meet the researcher's access needs while protecting the integrity of the materials. In some cases, accessibility enhancements may need to be made to allow specific assistive devices in the special collections facility. For example, many scholars with visual impairments use some form of digital magnification. Some of these devices use very bright light, which may be detrimental to artifacts. As an alternative, digital magnification technology is available that uses ambient rather than bright LED or fluorescent light. Advance knowledge of the need for digital magnification affords the individual or the institution time to procure the most optimal assistive technology.

Advance access to any tools or materials used in the group instructional exercise also benefits participants with disabilities. An advance copy of a course packet, for example, allows time for any needed alternative formats to be created. Similarly, taking the student through a "dry run" of activities increases both comfort and confidence for all parties concerned. For instance, familiarizing a participant who has impaired vision with a type-casting mould by allowing

them to handle the object and become familiar with how the parts fit together saves awkwardness, embarrassment, and delays during the event itself. By taking this step, both the instructor and the student will know what to expect, and accessibility needs can be worked out in advance. These preparations save class time, but they also prevent the undue disclosure of a disability before the entire group.

Accessibility concerns related to such a group exercise do not end when the class is over. As we noted above, assessment through participant feedback is essential to improving the experiences we design for all of our library patrons. However, we often overlook the accessibility of the mechanism by which this feedback is gathered. Thus, we run the risk of silencing certain populations among our students. As a general rule, we would advise asking students how they would prefer to give their feedback at the conclusion of the instruction.

Communication and individualization are key to accommodating scholars with disabilities who need access to special collections, yet such improvements to accessibility can and do often have unforeseen benefits to all stakeholders. For example, the digital magnification tools noted above can be indispensable for detecting watermarks or identifying marks hidden deep within the gutter of a binding. Taking measures to make practice-based research exercises more accessible may thus benefit everyone.

BENEFITS TO ALL

In the wake of the Americans with Disabilities Act, great strides have been made to improve the day-to-day lived experience of persons with disabilities. Crucially, this progress began with a recognition of institutional barriers, which (intentionally or not) had the effect of oppressing members of our society by placing limits on their personal freedoms. It is our hope that this article may serve a similar function by raising awareness of the lack of accessibility in special collections classrooms and thus

» **The issues that we have raised are relevant beyond the traditional boundaries of disability and library studies. The practices encouraged here are broadly applicable and will lead to more meaningful classroom experiences for all of our students.**

begin a wider critical conversation toward broadly applicable improvements, such as adopting a user-centered approach in the design of accessible instruction and the formation of a student advisory board to guide the direction of meeting campus needs. A productive dialogue around strategies toward diversification and long-term sustainability continues to progress within the field of special collections. We would submit that it is crucial for any such dialogue to be as broadly inclusive as possible and that this must include voices from members of our communities who have disabilities.

The issues that we have raised are relevant beyond the traditional boundaries of disability and library studies. The practices encouraged here are broadly applicable and will lead to more meaningful classroom experiences for all of our students.

The approach to outreach we advocate is a proactive one. It is self-consciously invested in reaching students where they are and is designed to meet their unique learning needs as individuals. If taken to heart, such strategies will also stimulate our creativity as educators, improving our teaching practice in any context. In so doing, we will more closely adhere to the ethics of our field, enhancing access to the cultural property in our care for the broadest possible population. ■

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Footnotes:

1 National Center for Education Statistics, "Postsecondary Education," Digest of Education Statistics, 2017 (U.S. Department of Education, 2018), https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/ch_3.asp. Debate persists in the disability studies community regarding the use of "People-First Language." This mode of rhetoric, which emerged in the early twenty-first century, argues that, when communicating about disability, the person should be privileged before the condition. Thus, a disability is something a person has, not something a person is (in other words, "individual with a disability" rather than "disabled individual"). Subsequently, many

groups have come forward counterarguing that People-First Language undermines their identity as part of a given disability culture. For example, many people who have visual impairments choose to be identified as "blind people." For the purposes of this article, however, we choose to use People-First Language because it emphasizes and exemplifies the user-centered approach to accessibility that we advocate here. For more on this debate, see Roger Collier, "Person First Language: Noble Intent but to What Effect?" *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 204, no. 18 (2012): 1977–78; and Angelo Muredda, "Fixing Language: 'People-First' Language, Taxonomical Prescriptivism, and the Linguistic Location of Disability," *The English Language: History, Diaspora, Culture* 3 (2012): 1–10.

- 2 National Center for Education Statistics, "Students with Disabilities at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions" (U.S. Department of Education, 2011), <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2011018>. Additionally, one must note that these are likely conservative numbers, as such statistics rely upon students self-identifying as disabled and electing to seek assistive services on campus.
- 3 Following the example set by the RBMS Task Force to Review the ACRL Code of Ethics for Special Collections Librarians, we have adopted "special collections practitioner" as a more inclusive terminology, which reflects the range of professional positions that may require primary source instruction.
- 4 A notable exception is work highlighting progress in making digital collections materials more accessible through the use of assistive technologies like screen readers. See, for example, Kristina L. Southwell and Jacquelyn Slater, "Accessibility of Digital Special Collections Using Screen Readers," *Library Hi Tech* 30, no. 3 (2012): 457–71.
- 5 See Colin Barnes, "The Social Model of Disability: A Sociological Phenomenon Ignored by Sociologists?" in *The Disability Reader: Social Science Perspectives*, ed. Tom Shakespeare (New York, NY: Continuum Books, 2005), 65–78.
- 6 See Simon Brisenden, "Independent Living and the Medical Model of Disability," *Disability, Handicap & Society* 1, no. 2: 173–78.
- 7 Gareth Williams, "The Sociology of Disability: Towards a Materialist Phenomenology," in *The Disability Reader: Social Science Perspectives*, ed. Tom Shakespeare (New York, NY: Continuum Books, 2005), 236.

- 8 Williams, "The Sociology of Disability," 236.
- 9 Gerard Giordano, *American Special Education: A History of Early Political Advocacy* (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2007), 39.
- 10 For more on this, see *Library Buildings, Equipment and the ADA: Compliance Issues and Solutions*, eds. Susan E. Cirillo and Robert E. Danford (Chicago, IL: ALA, 1996).
- 11 Folger Shakespeare Library, "Building Renovation Project," <https://www.folger.edu/about/building-renovation-project> [accessed February 20, 2020].
- 12 We would be remiss not to note the great strides that have been made to increase accessibility of collections materials through digitization. The scope of the present work, however, remains focused on outreach that incorporates physical special collections, specifically rare books, manuscripts, and other material artifacts.
- 13 Allison P. Hobgood, "An Introduction: On Caring," *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture* 15, no. 3 (October 2015): 414.
- 14 Rare Books and Manuscript Section, 2018 RBMS Conference program, <http://conference.rbms.info/2018/> [accessed February 20, 2020].
- 15 Rare Books and Manuscripts Section, "Commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion," <http://rbms.info/about/#diversity> [accessed February 20, 2020]. The full statement reads: "The Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of ACRL/ALA is committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion in its membership, in rare books and special collections librarianship, and among users of rare books, manuscripts, and special collections. RBMS encourages participation in the section by people of any race, color, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, and physical ability; it supports its members in serving the broadest possible population; and it seeks to represent the concerns and interests of rare books and special collections librarians at a variety of institutions, including academic libraries, public libraries, research libraries, special libraries, and historical societies." Rare Books and Manuscripts Section, "Diversity," <http://rbms.info/diversity/> [accessed February 20, 2020]. The charge of the RBMS Diversity Committee is as follows: "To encourage members of underrepresented racial and ethnic groups to join and participate in RBMS; to recruit members of these groups into the Special Collections profession; to partner with other groups in the library field that focus on diversity or diverse collections; to generate and facilitate seminars, workshops, and programs about collecting materials related to racial and ethnic groups and providing outreach to patrons from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds."
- 16 Rare Books and Manuscripts Section, "RBMS Task Force to Review the ACRL Code of Ethics for Special Collections Librarians," www.ala.org/acrl/rbms/acr-rbmtfce [accessed February 20, 2020].
- 17 As of this writing, a draft for the revised Code of Ethics has been approved by the RBMS Executive Committee and awaits formal approval from the ACRL Standards Committee. The draft approved by the RBMS Executive Committee may be read at <https://t.co/1Gtus7hPvw?amp=1>.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 A 2006 survey conducted by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) found that roughly 52 percent of survey respondents reported an increase in outreach activities. See Florence Turcotte and John Nemmers, *Public Services in Special Collections*, SPEC Kit 296 (Washington, DC: Association of Research Libraries, November 2006), 14.
- 20 Adam Berenbak et al., Special Collections Engagement, SPEC Kit 317 (Washington, DC: Association of Research Libraries, August 2010), 13. Respondents were special collections practitioners working on academic campuses.
- 21 Elizabeth Yakel and Deborah Torres, "AI: Archival Intelligence and User Expertise," *American Archivist* 66, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2003): 52.
- 22 Magia G. Krause, "'It Makes History Alive for Them': The Role of Archivists and Special Collections Librarians in Instructing Undergraduates," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 36, no. 5 (2010): 406.
- 23 Valerie Harris advocates for librarians and archivists "[putting] as much care and innovation into public services programs as they have in developing processes for description, access, and preservation," since many policies and procedures designed to protect collections materials may in fact pose barriers to our patrons' use of them. See Valerie A. Harris, "How Can I Help You? Becoming User-Centered in Special Collections," *Archival Issues* 32, no. 2 (2010): 71.
- 24 Anjali J. Forber-Pratt and Steven R. Aragon, "A Model of Social and Psychosocial Identity Development for Postsecondary Students with Physical Disabilities," in *Emerging Perspectives on Disability Studies*, eds. Matthew Wappett and Katrina Arndt (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 16.
- 25 Forber-Pratt and Aragon, "A Model of Social and Psychosocial Identity Development for Postsecondary Students with Physical Disabilities," 17.
- 26 Rick Godden and Jonathan Hsy, "Universal Design and its Discontents," *2016 MLA Position Papers*, Digital Edition, www.disruptingdh.com/universal-design-and-its-discontents/.
- 27 For more on assessment of special collections instruction, see Anne Bahde and Heather Smedberg, "Measuring the Magic: Assessment in the Special Collections and Archives Classroom," *RBM* 13, no. 2 (2012): 152–74.
- 28 Valerie A. Harris and Ann C. Weller, "Use of Special Collections as an Opportunity for Outreach in the Academic Library," *Journal of Library Administration* 52, no. 3/4 (2012): 295.
- 29 Harris and Weller, "Use of Special Collections as an Opportunity for Outreach in the Academic Library," 296.
- 30 Harris, "How Can I Help You?" 83.
- 31 For more on this social movement, see James I. Charlton, *Nothing About Us Without Us: Disability Oppression and Empowerment* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000).
- 32 Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblems* (Imprinted at Leiden in the house of Christopher Plantyn by Francis Raphelengius, 1586), 171.
- 33 For more on the development and use of such collections, see Kevin M. O'Sullivan, "The Continued Case for Bibliographical Teaching Collections," *portal: Libraries and the Academy* (forthcoming).
- 34 Rita Dunn, Jeffrey S. Beaudry, and Angela Klavas, "Survey of Research on Learning Styles," *California Journal of Science Education* 2, no. 2 (2002): 75, 87.
- 35 Quoted in S. Austin Allibone, *A Critical Dictionary of English Literature and British and American Authors* (Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott, 1891), 14.

Showcasing Institutional Research

» Curating Library Exhibits to Support Scholarly Communication

BY DEVINA DANDAR, JAIME CLIFTON-ROSS,
ANN DALE, & ROSIE CROFT

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge mobilization, the reciprocal communication of research findings between researchers, policy-makers, and the public within and beyond academia to increase research uptake and use to inform policy (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, 2019), is an ongoing challenge and an important objective for researchers that scholarly communication librarians support within their professional scope. In order to maximize the impact of research to benefit society, it is essential for research outputs to be openly available and communicated in a way that is accessible, engaging, and comprehensible. Libraries and librarians, therefore, with the traditional role they play in connecting research to their constituents, are optimally situated to find new and innovative ways to not only support their faculty in engaging audiences with their research but also broadening the reach of their work.

Showcase, a venue for knowledge mobilization, was established in the library building by the University Librarian (fourth author) at Royal Roads University Library in March 2017. Showcase aims to disseminate and promote institutional research and educational activities within and beyond the university community. Having created the space via a deselection of under-used materials and subsequent removal of stacks, the University Librarian hired the first author as its first full-time Scholarly Communication Librarian in August 2017 to spearhead this initiative. The first author supports the research needs of approximately 80 core faculty. Research at Royal Roads is applied and interdisciplinary, and thus is disseminated in a variety of formats, both in traditional publications (e.g. peer-reviewed journal articles and conference presentations) and through digital scholarship (e.g. artworks, photo essays, documentaries, and film projects).



This article discusses RRU Library's experiences with curating exhibits as a scholarly communication initiative to support institutional research dissemination and knowledge mobilization. As background, it examines a selection of articles that focus in particular on exhibits in academic libraries followed by literature from the museum sector centered on interpretation and engagement. It then explores the processes, challenges, and lessons learned in developing three research exhibits over a period of two years. It also describes the Library's next steps in further developing this initiative to continue to enhance knowledge mobilization. As curatorial practices are well established in the museum sector but are limited in application within the library sector, the goal of this article is to provide insight and guidance to support academic library professionals in promoting scholarly work through ongoing research exhibits.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Library Exhibits

Literature on academic library exhibits generally focuses on practices and recommen-

ations to attract new users and to promote and raise awareness of library resources, such as new books and collections (Fouracre, 2015). For example, the Association for Research Libraries (ARL) conducted a survey on engagement with special collections in 2010 to investigate how such institutions use displays or exhibits to connect with patrons. The ARL found that most research libraries use exhibits to conduct outreach by instructing patrons in how to use special collections materials (Swanick, Rankin & Reinhart, 2015). Public libraries on the other hand, including the Ottawa Public Library in Ontario, are connecting with their communities through such initiatives as the human library. This outreach model enables participants to "borrow" a scientist for an hour to learn more about their area of expertise and to engage in discussion.

This highlights the need for more literature exploring different ways exhibits can facilitate knowledge mobilization of faculty research. Nevertheless, the practices and recommendations in the literature on the "how-to" of creating exhibits can be adapted for these purposes, such as

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1) organizing exhibits around a theme, 2) selecting visually-stimulating material that tell stories, and 3) documenting policies and procedures ad-hoc to develop institutional-based practices around the development of exhibits (Dutka, Hayes, & Parnell, 2002; Fouracre, 2015; Swanick, Ranking, & Reinhart, 2015; Braun, 2017).

Building Partnerships

The literature also discusses how the process of curating library exhibits can help establish new or strengthen existing institutional and cross-institutional partnerships. Hildebrant, Knight-Davis, Pionke, & Cougill, 2019 articulated 5 recommendations for building partnerships through exhibits: 1) be open to establishing partnerships in unexpected places; 2) collaboration and teamwork are essential; 3) share policies and documentation with other libraries to develop recommended practices; 4) promote the exhibit; and 5) try new things. In addition to these recommendations, Dutka et al. (2002) discussed how exhibit space within the library is a powerful tool for collaboration across campus units, as teaching, learning, and/or research activities can be shared in the space, such as student art exhibits.

Curatorial Training

Although library exhibits are a popular outreach strategy, many library professionals are not always prepared to assume the role of curator. Many have not received formal training in curating exhibits or learned these skills while on the job, an issue discussed in Fouracre's (2015) study on library staff experience with curatorial best practices. This finding was also echoed by Dutka et al. (2002) who suggested that exhibit design and curatorial activities are a "surprise" part of the librarian's role. Braun's (2017) article on lessons learned from creating exhibits in academic libraries discussed how "... the experience of curating and installing exhibits—was crucial to the development of the exhibit commit-

tee's knowledge and confidence" (p. 15). These articles suggest that there is a need for academic library professionals to address this challenge by harnessing literature and resources from the museum field that are adaptable for libraries.

Museum Interpretation and Engagement

Museums have been educating and engaging the public for many years and have developed a rich body of literature that covers a myriad of subjects. For the purpose of this discussion, we will include select articles that we believe are applicable to the library field. Tilden (1957), the grandfather of interpretation, suggests that information in and of itself is not interpretation. Rather interpretation is a "*revelation* based upon information" (p. 9) and that its main concern is "not instruction, but provocation" (p. 9). Alexander later expanded on this by stating that interpretation is educational by nature as it intends to reveal meanings by eliciting curiosity, inquiry, and understanding (1977). Wells, Butler, and Koke (2013) describe it as a deliberate thinking, decision-making, and writing process intended to facilitate "meaningful and effective experiences for visitors, learning institutions, and communities" (p. 36). Devine (2017) defines interpretation and education as the way in which museums "communicate their message(s) to the public" (p. 28). And finally, McGhie (2019) argues that museums need to move beyond simply transferring information and should position themselves as accelerators of progress by drawing connections to social contexts through interpretation.

Museums experienced a paradigmatic shift in the late 20th century where collections and the voice of the curator were no longer the singular priority of such institutions (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992). Declining visitor numbers and public demand for knowledge helped transform curatorial methodologies, making them more collaborative and mindful of visitor engagement (1992). Simon (2010) suggests that for museums to connect to the public and

to assert their cultural relevance, they must invite visitors to "actively engage as cultural participants, not passive consumers" (p. ii). Participatory museums, therefore, curate a range of content to address the diverse needs of visitors while establishing such spaces as environments that foster dialogue, meaning-making, and co-creation (2010). Pekarik and Mogel (2010) developed a museum engagement framework as part of a visitor study conducted at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian. Their results shaped the Idea-People-Object: Attract, Engage, and Flip (IPO-AEF) framework that suggests exhibits be designed strategically "to appeal to one of the three preferences: Idea, Object, or People" (p. 473), as each preference taps into the prior experiences and learning styles of visitors, and then flipped to another. For example, content can be disseminated through text for visitors who prefer engaging by reading information (ideas), through objects for visitors who prefer visuals (objects), or through stories of lived experiences for people who connect with the human or social factor (people). The goal, however, is to entice the visitor to flip from 'object' to 'people' or 'ideas' or vice-versa, thereby expanding their engagement. Delivering content through text, objects, or stories allows for greater impact as it provides multiple points of entry for engagement. Finally, Serrell (2015) suggests that exhibit-makers and label writers must understand the basic drivers of humans such as "visitors' emotions, their yearning for continuity, love of a good story, ability to see and seek patterns, and natural spirituality" to enhance engagement (p. 54). This literature ultimately suggests that strategic interpretation is essential for meaningful engagement with information and that visitors bring exhibits to life.

DESCRIPTION OF SERVICE

The Royal Roads University Library Showcase is a physical venue (place) for displaying and highlighting the university's innovative and applied real-world research. Show-

case supports the university's strategic research themes by providing opportunities to increase awareness of research and educational activities at the university, and by promoting research dissemination and learning within and beyond the Royal Roads community. Showcase serves to inspire students, staff, faculty, and the community and to strengthen their relationships with the university and invites the observer to place their own learning and experience within the broader context of research at the university. Showcase has been developed from the ground up by the first and fourth authors as a knowledge mobilization initiative for core faculty and select student research.

Showcase includes two walls of the library building for hanging displays, counterposing a glass wall and the stack ends. It also has four standing, foldable wall panels that can be deployed to create additional space to mount materials vertically. Three iPads and a separate media room with a touchscreen TV are available to display digital research items, such as videos and data visualizations. Although the goal is to augment this space into one that inspires Royal Roads Library users and visitors through displays, Showcase continues to provide study space for students. The Library closely collaborates with faculty and/or their research teams to plan, organize, curate, and promote their exhibits in two ways: 1) identify the faculty member's goals for research dissemination and support them through the curatorial process; and 2) coordinate the display period with related on-campus student residencies, giving faculty opportunities to engage their students with their research. To extend engagement with faculty research online and beyond the display period of six to eight weeks, the library also archives photographs of exhibits in the institutional repository, VIURRSpace.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Challenge 1 - Encouraging Faculty Participation - Exhibit: Life off Grid

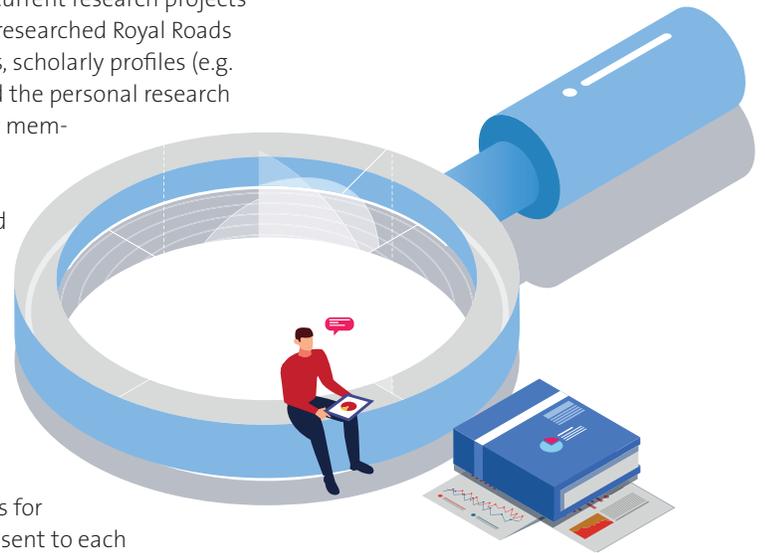
Sourcing research content to exhibit in Showcase is an ongoing challenge, as many faculty members at Royal Roads University work remotely. Therefore, in order for the first author to develop a solid understanding of research activities at the university, it was imperative to proactively reach out to faculty and establish relationships with them to learn about their research activities, interests, and goals. To gain a preliminary

understanding of current research projects and activities, she researched Royal Roads faculty biographies, scholarly profiles (e.g. ResearchGate), and the personal research websites of faculty members. Working with the fourth author, she then developed a list of faculty who might have research content that could be translated into various multimedia formats to create engaging exhibits. Invitations for participation were sent to each faculty member on the list. Meetings were then coordinated with interested parties to provide more information about how Showcase could support their research initiatives, especially in promoting and disseminating their research outcomes.

This process presented two challenges. First, the first author began reaching out to faculty shortly after she was hired in her role. However, this resulted in a low response rate as she did not have established relationships with the campus community, and the latter was unfamiliar with the services she offered. Second, when faculty responded to invitations, it was difficult to describe and demonstrate the potential of the new Showcase venue for the promotion of research without having any concrete examples to which to refer.

To address the first challenge, partnering with other internal colleagues was essential as the first author could leverage already-established faculty-librarian relationships to make new connections and promote Showcase. For example, the first author met faculty through the University Librarian (fourth author) and also joined meetings with colleagues and was subsequently invited to casual work meetings to further foster the relationship. This personalized strategy was successful as faculty were more responsive to invitations to participate in Showcase, given their new familiarity with the first author. The library was also fortunate to receive some financial support from the Office of Research for exhibit-related supplies.

Cultivating relationships with faculty was, therefore, essential to getting Showcase off the ground and for laying the foundation for further collaborations. These steps helped the first author better under-



stand the research landscape at Royal Roads and the rich scholarly output of faculty and research groups. This information then helped determine the potential for research outcomes to be translated into multimedia formats and subsequently communicated to both academic and non-academic audiences. Maintaining relationships with faculty is also important in staying current with new and upcoming research activities at the university, which is essential for finding future research content for exhibits and for providing ongoing scholarly communication support for faculty.

To demonstrate the potential of Showcase, the first author collaborated with the Archives Manager and a faculty member, Dr. Phillip Vannini, who had donated his "Life Off Grid" photo and film collection about Canadians living off renewable energy to the Royal Roads Archives. While Showcase had previously displayed two displays featuring Indigenous artworks, this would be the first exhibit of institutional research.

The curatorial process began by liaising with Dr. Vannini to better understand his research and exploring how to optimize dissemination strategies using Showcase infrastructure and materials. This was particularly important as the literature stipulates that collaboration is essential to curating a successful exhibit. The first author then posed three questions to help guide the discussion: 1) describe the research (what is the purpose of the research); 2) what outputs will be/were used to disseminate research (how will the research be shared); and 3) who are the target audiences (who will use the research). These initial questions and the subsequent discussion helped the first

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author learn more about the researcher’s work and supported the development of a unified vision for the exhibit based on a shared understanding of how it could support mutual knowledge mobilization goals. Establishing this foundation, along with following recommendations from the literature, helped guide the early stages of the curatorial process.

Based on the recommendation to exhibit story-based materials, the donated photographs were displayed alongside quotes from the researcher’s new book. This more traditional form of research output helped illustrate the story of how Canadians live off grid and how research methods can be carried out in remote locations. One curatorial goal was to highlight and support teaching activities about video ethnography in practice, therefore a documentary produced about the project was made available for viewing in the Showcase media room. The intention was to engage students and other visitors with arts-based research methods. The first author and Archives Manager also created a book display encouraging visitors to borrow *Off the Grid: Re-Assembling Domestic Life* from the library’s collection.

To further broaden the reach of the research, the exhibit was promoted to the Royal Roads community via the library’s social media channels and the university newsletter. Photographs from the exhibit were also deposited in Royal Roads’s institutional repository to preserve and promote the exhibit online, making it accessible to off-campus library users and the public. The University Communications department also retweeted social media posts about Showcase via the main university Twitter account. The first author subsequently received questions about Showcase from a few faculty and staff members who learned about the venue through these promotional channels. The questions were predominantly general inquiries about Showcase, however a couple of faculty members inquired

about exhibit potential of their research. The first author used these questions as a foundation for building deeper connections with faculty and to find potential Showcase contributors. This process highlighted the importance of strategically promoting Showcase exhibits to faculty to increase engagement and participation with this library initiative.

The first author also received suggestions from library staff for enhancing the exhibit, such as using larger fonts for the text excerpts of the manuscript, creating a large title panel to draw visitors into the space from afar, and including an introductory panel or curatorial statement to briefly describe the exhibit and research outcomes for visitors looking to “get the gist.” Upon further reflection, the first author also recognized the need for the existing text panels to portray stronger connections between the *Off the Grid: Re-Assembling Domestic Life* manuscript and the research outcomes of the project. This feedback and reflection highlighted the need for museum interpretation practices and frameworks to be applied in the curation of future exhibits.

Challenge 2 – Reformatting Academic Research into Multimedia Formats – Exhibit: Applied Interdisciplinarity in Scholar Practitioner Programs

Most academic research is typically disseminated in peer-reviewed publications, books, and conference proceedings. These research outputs are not always accessible to the public because of a variety of barriers, including paywalls, academic jargon and language, and a lack of public distribution. These create challenges for interpreting, curating, and reformatting academic information into engaging multimedia formats for diverse audiences. These barriers were amplified during the process of curating an exhibit showcasing an academic book edited by Dr. Siomonn Pulla, Associate Professor and Program Head of RRU’s Doctor

of Social Sciences program, and Dr. Bernard Schissel, Professor Emeritus. Entitled *Applied Interdisciplinarity in Scholar Practitioner Programs: Narratives of Social Change*, it featured chapters authored by the first eight graduates of Royal Roads’s Doctor of Social Sciences program. Each chapter details the student’s thesis or dissertation project along with their research process.

As this publication was written for academic audiences, the first author and Dr. Pulla tackled the challenge of reformatting this output by using the “Idea, People, Object” museum framework to interpret the information. To achieve this, the first author requested each graduate provide a photograph or graphic such as a chart or diagram to represent their research project as the material element (object) along with a text selection from their book chapter for context (idea). Each graduate was also asked to share a brief description about how the material and text selections connect to their research, as this provided insight into their respective processes for integrating applied research into their workplace to address real-world issues. Some graduates also created short videos discussing their research projects, which were also included in the media room to provide a narrative element in the exhibit (people). The eBook was also available on iPads to encourage visitors to further engage with the research in its original publication format.

As this was the library’s first attempt at experimenting with reformatting academic research into multimedia formats, the library hosted an open house for Royal Roads staff, faculty, and students as well as some non-Royal Roads affiliated visitors to informally assess visitor engagement. Over the course of the event and the exhibit display period, library staff received feedback from numerous visitors from across the university. Many commented on how they connected to different interpretive elements—text selections and project description (ideas),

photographs and/or diagrams (objects), or videos (people). Some faculty suggested the addition of interactive elements in the exhibit, such as a feedback wall or digital presentation of the research outcomes, to further engage visitors with the research. In addition, this exhibit display period coincided with a Doctor of Social Sciences on-campus residency. These students in particular expressed interest in accessing the full thesis or dissertation of the exhibited projects to inform their own research. While the first author recommended the institutional repository to access the full project, a laptop should have been included as part of the exhibit so that students could delve further into the research displayed. The feedback received from instructors and students emphasized the importance of presenting information in various layers, including technology to have other media formats available, and incorporating interactive elements so that visitors can choose the level of engagement they have with the content, thereby engaging diverse audiences. The first author continues to improve upon applying the “Idea, People, Object” framework for the development of future exhibits when reformatting academic research into different mediums. Feedback from this exhibit was taken into consideration going forward.

Challenge 3 – Integrating Technology – Exhibit: Sustainable Communities: Making a Difference

The second and third authors collaboratively curated “Sustainable Communities: Making a Difference,” a multimedia exhibit showcasing Professor Ann Dale’s 15 years of research on sustainable community development in Canada. As the Canada Research Chair in Sustainable Community Development (2004-2014), a Trudeau Fellow Alumna, and the Director of the School of Environment and Sustainability at Royal Roads University, her research team, *Community Research Connections* (CRC Research), has a diverse research agenda including more recently integrating curatorial practices from the museum field into their dissemination strategies, under the leadership of the second author. As they collaboratively developed the practice of research curation (Clifton-Ross, Dale & Newell, 2019) they curated research exhibits as a way to not only share their research with the university community and the wider public, but to also test the efficacy of certain curatorial methods within an academic setting.



Given the volume of research produced during the lengthy period of Professor Dale’s research program, it was challenging to develop a cohesive and engaging interpretive program. The main curatorial goal for the “Sustainable Communities” exhibit was to experiment with disseminating complex social science concepts and academic research in engaging and interactive ways. As a multimedia exhibit, it showcased CRC Research’s outcomes through the following media types: framed giclee canvases designed with high-quality photographs and text; interpretive panels; web pages displayed on iPads; an interactive climate scenario activity; a monitor with interactive content (videos, data visualizations, etc.); a message board; a painting; and reports and books. Highlighting their research subjects, methodologies, and outcomes, they framed their exhibit by project rather than theme. To establish consistency between each project, they developed a content formula of four parts: project outline, challenges, research process, and research outcomes. Following museum label writing methodologies, they wrote the text at a fifth-grade reading level, included shorter sentences, and ensured their writing style was engaging. They designed colourful and aesthetically pleasing framed canvases and juxtaposed the text with relevant photographs for each project. When hung along a track system, the canvases mimicked artworks by bringing the white ‘gallery’ walls of the library to life.

For many years, CRC Research has experimented with integrating technology into their research agenda and prioritized the use of social media for research dissemination. As a result, much of their research outcomes are reformatted into videos, data visualizations, interactive maps, and across their social media channels, in addition to the traditional academic streams (e.g. peer-reviewed publications, conference presentations, and books). The main challenge that the CRC Research team encountered when curating this exhibit was how to adequately incorporate technology while balancing visual, text, and digital content (2019). When integrating technology into exhibits, “using technology for the sake of technology often makes for ineffective displays” (Clifton-Ross, 2019, para. 7). It also runs the risk of devaluing the content as technical features can sometimes overwhelm or overshadow content. The use of technology should therefore be deliberate as it is supplementary to interpretive content in exhibits (Oleson, 2016). Devices such as iPads should only be used if they enhance experience, provide deeper meaning, and are contextually relevant (2016). They must also seamlessly integrate with non-technological elements, such as canvases, text panels, photographs, and artworks.

Since CRC Research reformatted many of their research outcomes into data visualizations, videos, maps, and subsequently shared them widely across their social media channels, it was important that this content be seamlessly integrated with the canvases and interpretive panels (2019). A solution to this issue was developing a series of web pages on Squarespace to showcase select projects that had extensive portfolios of digital content. These microsites were displayed on iPads and positioned in front of their coordinating canvases. Without duplicating content, the CRC Research team’s objectives for visitors was to be able to jump back and forth between digital and print content. For example, one display showcased a project exploring the co-benefits of climate action. The canvas detailed the research process and outcomes while the microsite shared climate models, an interactive Kumu map, and a video. Through a simple design evocative of the “white cube gallery” and high-quality photographs, the web pages linked to interactive content referenced on the canvases. As the canvas content formula provided visitors with a high-level summary of the project,

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the iPads encouraged them to dive deeper by exploring data visualizations or learning more through case studies and videos. This feature provided visitors with user-control and encouraged them to click on content and trigger animations. It also established an interplay between print and digital content, thereby enhancing visitor interactivity. CRC Research subsequently adapted the Squarespace microsites into a full exhibit website highlighting both the original digital and print content.

Another curatorial issue the CRC Research team encountered was either oversimplifying or overcomplicating their research projects, given “Sustainable Communities” was displayed in a public yet academic setting. To tackle this curatorial challenge, they integrated the “skim, swim, dive” museum framework developed by Charlotte Sexton, the former Digital Media head at The National Gallery, as this ensured visitors had access to varying depths of information. For example, if visitors wished to “skim” the surface of the exhibit, they could read the canvases. If they wished to “swim” deeper, they could explore content on the iPads. If the two previous levels encouraged them to engage further with the subject, they could scan QR codes hyperlinked to peer-reviewed journal articles and case studies or they could read books and reports that were on display. This also encouraged visitors to move back and forth between content levels as well as the digital and print elements. What made this curatorial process successful was the collaboration between the first author and the CRC Research team. With a range of knowledge and skills in the areas of sustainable community development, climate change, social learning, curatorial practice, digital communication, graphic design, scholarly communication, knowledge mobilization, web development, and data visualization, they were able to harness the power of transdisciplinarity.

In order to test the “power” of this

exhibit, the third author invited one of her environmental studies classes to tour the exhibit and to act as an informal focus group to discuss the most captivating features and what curatorial elements could be improved. The CRC Research team was impressed by how engaged the students were and how much they enjoyed exploring the different facets of interpretive content. What was most striking was that every student was attracted to something different. For example, many students spent a considerable amount of time exploring content on the iPads, others enjoyed watching videos in the screening room, some preferred testing the scenario activity, while fewer read the text on the giclee canvases. Some expressed surprise and appreciation for the painting, while others found it too abstract and did not understand its connection to the research outcomes. This confirmed the importance of presenting research in a variety of media formats (i.e. iPad content, scenario activity, books, giclees, videos, data visualizations, etc.), using the “Idea, People, Object” framework, in order to provide multiple points of entry for visitors that appeal to their diverse interests and learning styles. One criticism was that the exhibit content was too high-level for the students, given their existing knowledge and background in environmental studies. For this particular audience segment, they wanted more in-depth explanations and solutions. However, this criticism underlines the importance of curating exhibits around audience engagement. In this case, the research interpretations were intended for audiences who had little to no knowledge of sustainable community development.

Although the faculty community were invited to bring their classes to the exhibit, there was very little take-up of this option. This underlines the importance of continuously advertising the venue through a variety of formats (i.e. social media, newsletters, blogs, etc.) and demonstrating potential en-

agement activities (i.e. tours, curator talks, class discussion activities). The third author also received direct feedback from members of the larger community who “happened” by the exhibit in the course of the use of the library as a public space, and then contacted CRC Research expressing a desire to engage with her research team.

NEXT STEPS AND CONCLUSION

The Royal Roads Library Showcase has hosted 15 faculty and 5 doctoral candidate research exhibits to date. The next steps in developing Showcase are to assess and evaluate the impact of this initiative, capture attendance statistics via survey; and develop a digital site to facilitate greater accessibility of the exhibits and widen the reach of the exhibited research to distance users and the public.

Assessing the impact of Showcase is an important next step. The library recently started requesting faculty feedback via a survey in LibCal, a platform for library scheduling and event management, about their experience with curating research exhibits at the end of the display period. The goal of the survey is to ask faculty and research groups about their experiences collaborating with the library to plan and promote their research, and to provide open-ended questions to invite suggestions and comments. The library is also exploring the use of LibCal to capture attendance statistics to Showcase events (such as an open house or launch event for exhibits) and to survey visitors about their overall experience.

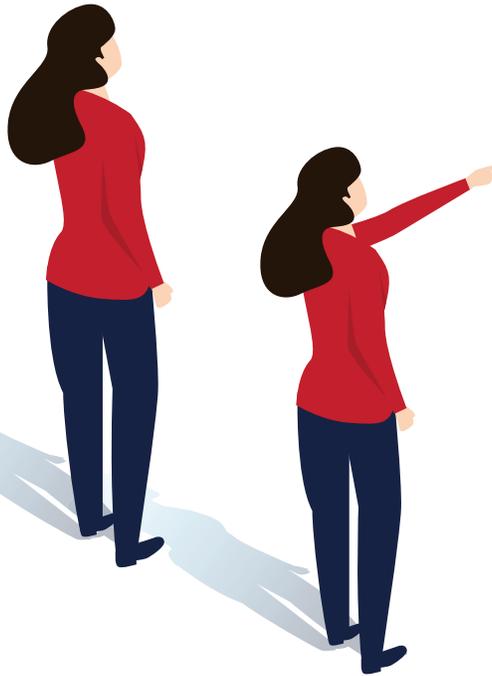
Many faculty members expressed a desire to exhibit research in Showcase in order to share their work and secure opportunities for collaboration with other faculty members and researchers at Royal Roads University, in particular, those who work remotely. While photographs of each exhibit are uploaded—with the addition of relevant metadata—to the institutional repository, this format is intended as a tool

for archiving and recordkeeping rather than community engagement.

Therefore, in order to meet this faculty request and engage distance users, a Wordpress site is currently in development in collaboration with Royal Roads's Centre for Teaching and Educational Technologies. To mimic the experience of visiting the physical exhibit, the library is experimenting with creating a virtual tour using the Wordpress 360 panoramic image plugin. In addition to Wordpress, and in response to the temporary closure of campus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the library is exploring Omeka to create born digital exhibits as the platform provides specific functionalities for sharing photographs, videos, curated text content, visualizations, and links to faculty research bios and outputs to encourage users to dive deeper into the various layers of information from each exhibit, further building on the in-person experience of Showcase.

Academic library professionals can also benefit from widely available museum literature and resources on curatorial, interpretation, and audience engagement best practices. However, such information will require adaptation to meet the needs of academic library environments, as there are unique challenges specific to the library sector in relation to roles, resources, and scholarly research. More research is needed on developing specific curatorial practices for academic libraries as communicating research outcomes differs from communicating museum research and collections. One way this could be achieved is by having library and museum professionals collaborate to develop exhibits and integrate their practices. Library professionals can also participate in museum conferences, join online communities of practice (i.e. Facebook groups), and engage in resource sharing with museum professionals.

The physical academic library space, no matter the size, has great potential for research interpretation and communication via non-traditional media formats to engage academic and non-academic audiences alike, contributing to the reach and impact of research. It is our hope that by describing the process and sharing lessons learned in developing Showcase, our experiences can provide a unique perspective and guidance for library professionals who are curating exhibits to support scholarly communication and research dissemination within and beyond their institutions. ■



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