

LIBRARY ISSUES

BRIEFINGS FOR FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATORS

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Leveraging Cultural Collections

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Every institution of higher education has a culture. Sometimes that comes from those who founded the institution or the principles upon which it was founded. Often it is enhanced by notable alumni. The community in which the institution is located may also contribute. Similarly, donations can form the basis upon which identity may arise in distinguished ways.

Not every institution takes advantage of the treasure which this culture encompasses. It is a missed opportunity for making connections, marketing, and promotion of the institution within the campus and beyond. Often these treasures are already in your campus library.

Thinking differently about our cultural collections provides new possibilities for intellectual engagement. They are not just things which we own, but experiences waiting to connect others to our campus' values and learning. Sometimes we accept materials uncertain of the worth, but an event acts as a catalyst which then draws positive attention to our campus. We can all use stories that capture the imagination and reinforce the affirming culture we have to share with our communities.

What is Cultural Heritage?

Cultural heritage can be defined as "an expression of the ways of living developed by a community and passed on from generation to generation, including customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions and values." (http://www.cultureindevelopment.nl/cultural_heritage/what_is_cultural_heritage). Heritage is both tangible and intangible. It may include artifacts and customs.

When thinking about cultural collections, think broadly. It could be university or college records,

founders' correspondence, or oral history projects of alumni reminiscence. All may be a rich source of institutional values and customs.

Mikail M. McIntosh-Doty, Director of Library Services at the CTX Library, Concordia University Texas, partnered with the Portal to Texas History at the University of North Texas, via a grant from the Texas State Library and Archives Commission made possible by the Institute of Museums and Library Services (IMLS).

The project digitized some of the early correspondence of institution founders, films, and photographs from alumni and their families. The translations of the correspondence was particularly challenging as it was a combination of "German, Texan, English, and church German -- or a Germanesque Spanglish of sorts" (McIntosh-Doty correspondence with author, February 11, 2016). While a fascinating dive into the institution and Texas history, one of the unlooked for benefits was student engagement. "Because we had little staff and no money and limited equipment to do a digital project," states McIntosh-Doty, student workers were involved in loading the images and information. They were also encouraged to post their pictures on the pages they worked on and then to link to those pages on their resumes where they described the work they did for the library. This contributed to student success. To examine the project results, see <http://libraryguides.concordia.edu/archivesonline>.

Coming Soon —

Retirement: The Final Issue

Institutional Cultural Heritage

Some institutions have purposefully defined themselves by their cultural heritage. One Historically Black College and University (HBCU) is an example of this all-encompassing approach. During the April 2016 Alabama Library Association meeting, Dr. Janice Franklin, Dean of the Levi Watkins Learning Center, described the work Alabama State University (ASU), an HBCU, did to transform into a cultural learning place. Franklin coined the phrase “cultural learning place” to describe this transformation. What follows is a summary of her presentation and all credit for the content is hers: The library's transformation was a part of the campus' own transformation that resulted from the expansion and construction of new programs and facilities at Alabama State University. She talked about the nexus achieved by a convergence of libraries, archives, cultural heritage centers, museums, public history programming, and integration across academic disciplines on her campus. This work established spaces for preservation, teaching, learning, discovery and community engagement. It included exhibits, thematic curriculum, partnerships with the National Park Service, proposing the campus seek to establish a cultural district on campus, and formation of centers, such as The National Center for the Study of Civil Rights and African-American Culture at ASU. The value of this work, Franklin explained, is that it transformed her campus while supporting teaching and learning, preserving legacies and institutional memory, built collections and community, offered diverse experiences for life-long learning, incorporated all formats both physical and digital, provided a user experience and interactive engagement that fosters collaboration, understanding, world views, and globalism.

The University of Washington (UW) is another example of an institution that increased a focus on cultural heritage. In this case it was on indigenous knowledge. In March 2015 they opened the Intellectual House as a tangible recognition of the area's original peoples. With this center recognition evolved that the

focus shifted from one on indigenous populations in a historical context to an increased understanding and recognition of their relevance today. It created an approach centered on relationships and collaboration. No longer is it about researching on indigenous cultures, but rather on working with the indigenous communities to define appropriate research. This acknowledgement of responsibility to no longer impose perspectives of colonialism, but to highlight the voices and perspectives of indigenous communities, has awakened a new approach to community engagement. They define themselves as a home of indigenous knowledge where such knowledge is nurtured.

Most of us do not have such all-encompassing opportunities including new buildings and comprehensive programming like those described at ASU or UW. So on a more limited scale, here are a few examples that may resonate:

- Robert Fleming, Emerson College's Iwasaki Library's executive director (Boston, MA), shared that his library has been home to the apartment set from the television show *Will and Grace*. Show creator and alumnus Max Mutchnick loaned it to the library. When Vice President Joe Biden credited the TV show for helping to change attitudes about homosexuality, not only did it bring positive attention to Mutchnick, but the set resonated with the gay community in a special way drawing visitors to the campus and the library.

- At the 50th anniversary commemorating the death of the civil rights activist and home town hero Jonathan Daniels, the Mason Library at Keene State College (Keene, NH), featured a photographic display of Daniels' and others images. During a special service four of the people who were with Daniels when he was shot were in town. Three of them came to the library to see the display. Celia Rabinowitz, Dean of the Library, shared that this was when they discovered they had the last photo ever taken of Daniels as he was being led into the jail at Haynesville, Alabama. One of the commemoration visitors recognized the location and provided the additional historical context. The library's collaboration in

the commemoration event resulted in receipt of more materials that enriched the collection and provided community educational opportunities about Daniels' importance to civil rights history.

- Tim Schlak, currently the director of the Robert Morris University Library (Pittsburgh, PA), noted that when he was the director and archivist of the Northwestern College Library (Orange City, Iowa) he co-authored a book called *Orange City (Images of America)*. The book drew heavily on materials from the library's archives. The direct anticipated benefit from the project was that all proceeds from book sales would go to the Northwestern College Library Archives. The book publisher sells primarily through author promoted local sales. With this expectation the authors set up a booth during the city's 2014 Tulip Festival. The Festival draws approximately 50,000 people to the town of 6,000. The book sold out. Later opportunities to engage within the community included a presentation to a local service club.

Leveraging your Cultural Collections

In the February 18, 2016 issue of the ACRL's *Keeping Up With*, co-authors Gina Calia-Lotz and Cindy Conley, from Harford Community College (Bel Air, MD), stated, “Academic librarians can foster ‘diverse learning opportunities through culturally relevant library collections’...sponsor multicultural-themed exhibits and programs that promote diversity...educate students about different cultures while showing the library as a supportive, welcoming place for all...to study and learn.” They also suggest that librarians as academics have a moral responsibility to be change agents supporting and facilitating student learning and that libraries as campus centers can make a significant impact on supporting diversity and student success. One way to accomplish this is through leveraging cultural collections.

Shavonn Matsuda, a librarian at the University of Hawaii at Maui College, stated during a presentation at the Ho'okele Na'auao 2016 (A Hawaiian Librarianship Symposium) there is an

Are Cultural Collections Relevant?

Cultural collections are a “hot topic,” as evidenced in the multiple courses, conferences, and articles on the subject.

Courses are being provided in Library schools with titles such as “Libraries as Cultural Heritage Institutions,” (University of Southern Florida), a “Cultural Heritage Conservation and Management” program, (Sir Sandford Fleming College, Ontario), and program concentrations such as “Cultural Heritage,” (Simmons College).

Conferences have abounded on the topic too, from the Canadian Association of Professional Academic Librarians (CAPAL) May 2016 program, “Beyond the Library” which was described as an opportunity to “rethink how academic librarians engage with their communities within which our institutions are situated or those with whom we share disciplinary concerns or approaches,” (<http://capalibrarians.org/capal16/>), to the Carterette Webinar “ALT Maps: Using Archival Resources to Visualize History” offered by <https://atlmmaps.com/>. This trend is not limited to higher education. The San Francisco Public Library sponsored “Beyond Books: Capturing the Unique in Community Collections.”

Publications also provide rich resources for thinking about leveraging cultural collections. For outreach to K-12 education, “Creating Culturally Relevant Collections to Support the Common Core: A Framework for Teacher Librarians,” by Carol Doll and Kasey Garrison (June 1, 2013) provides a guide for teachers in making connections to other cultures through collections and integration into the Common Core State Standards Initiative. *The RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* devoted its September 21, 2012 issue to the topic of cultural collections. Publications, such as the Council on Library and Information Resources’ book, *Business Planning for Cultural Heritage Institutions* in 2004, and Meredith Farkas’ article, “Our Digital Heritage: Bringing Local History to Life Online,” (*American Libraries*, May 2016), were intended to identify methods of approaching such collections in the 21st Century.

International trends: Inclusion of culture as a focus is also a national and international trend. South Korea just announced that their public libraries are evolving into what is being referred to as “culture development centers” (The Korea Bizwire, June 7, 2016, <http://koreabizwire.com/koreas-public-libraries-become-more-than-just-libraries/56928>). The Korea Bizwire reports, “The contents of Korean libraries are also changing to better meet their visitors’ needs. Libraries are offering more diversity, including children’s and multi-cultural reference rooms, as well as culture programs like humanities lectures.”

Multi-disciplinary trends: The inclusion of cultural collections is not limited to one disciplinary field or solely to tangible holdings. The Map Carterette includes use of Global Information Systems (GIS) to layer new meaning upon digitized artifacts. The articles on assessment examined how to include the value of these holdings into contributing to the return on investment of the institution. A recent call for papers for a workshop on Advanced Visual Interfaces for Cultural Heritage had a goal of bringing together researchers and practitioners to explore advanced visual interfaces to enhance cultural heritage experiences through methods such as 3D scanning and virtual reality to provide immersive learning (<http://avich-16.di.unito.it/cfp.html>).

As our understanding of information and the work of the academic library expands, so does the potential uses of our cultural collections.

opportunity with cultural collections to represent knowledge in a way that is meaningful to the community. She encouraged us to ask, what is our responsibility to the community whose cultural collections we preserve? We should not be asking what the collection can do for us, but what can we do for the community. Dr. Ku’uleilani Reyes, a lecturer in the Library and Information Science program at the University of Hawaii at Mānoa, during the same symposium suggested that such collections provide an opportunity to invite the community in to collaborate on how information on exhibit is described and represented, making certain it is done in a respectful manner.

During a March 9, 2016 lecture Reyes also discussed that libraries needed to move from a concept of collectors and owners to ones of stewards who collaborate and negotiate. These concepts are important to stress with indigenous knowledge collections where there may be issues surrounding open access as some information may have been donated with the concept that it is to be preserved for families and not for the whole world. Reyes said, “More than just ‘stuff,’ for some of us it is our families. There’s mana in that stuff. It is alive. It is our history.” She went on to speak about the concept of functionality of cultural artifacts and the need for access for the people to live and learn. She called cultural heritage centers “a reflection of us.”

Further, at the May 2016 Native America Indigenous Studies Association meeting held on the University of Hawaii at Mānoa campus, Reyes described presentations on tribal archives and museums bringing together contemporary native/indigenous artists to study and create artwork. She noted that the artists studied the archival material and re-created pieces inspired by the ancestors. Some artists recognized their teachers’ and families’ works in the museum collections, which connected them with past, present and future generations. Reyes stated that the environment is ripe for museum/library staff members to collaborate with cultural experts to provide access to the pieces.

Interview with Joy Kirchner

Joy Kirchner, University Librarian, York University (Toronto, Ontario) and Madeleine Lefebvre, Chief Librarian, Ryerson University (Toronto, Ontario) sponsored a workshop called “Linked Open Data in Cultural Heritage Workshop (LODLAM),” which was held at both institutions May 12 through 13, 2016. LODLAM stands for Linked Open Data in Libraries, Archives and Museums.

LODLAM is gaining prominence in the cultural heritage community, especially among memory institutions, and may have a profound effect on the way resources are discovered and accessed. The event brought data experts from across North America. See <http://www.library.yorku.ca/lodlamto/> for more information about the workshop content.

I sat down with Joy Kirchner and asked her what generated the workshop and her thoughts on what administrators could do to support this effort working with cultural collections.

Kirchner explained the event was spearheaded by York’s W.P. Scott Chair in E-Librarianship, Stacy Allison-Cassin, who chose linked open data as her area of concentration as part of her successful application for this endowed chair position. Librarians hold deep expertise in this area as the traditional creators of indexes, databases, and standards. Linked data is a means of creating structure that leverages machine-readable connections between content stores. For the cultural heritage sector making their vast stores of content more findable and enabling connections between interconnected content is a huge boon for researchers and the public at large.

Kirchner is seeing new heightened institutional value placed on the libraries for the expertise they have as another component of the knowledge creation skillset provided to the community. Kirchner noted donors love it too.

Kirchner viewed the library administrator’s task as promoting and heightening this new approach to cultural collections and its value as an important contribution to the research enterprise at the VP Research level. This led to important recognition for the libraries and Allison-Cassin being named as one of York’s University Research Leaders. The library was always a research environment, but now more visible by creating a new understanding of connections through linking data.

Kirchner shared her thoughts about what administrators can do to support the evolving environment of 21st century cultural collections:

- Shine a light on your resources and your people
- Think about how to make work more transformative
- Provide professional development and collaborative opportunities for acquiring new skill sets
- Translate vision in a way so others can buy into it and support the work
- Start where you are even if the ultimate “vision” seems far away
- Don’t give up.

Embracing the responsibility that comes with preserving cultural collections provides powerful opportunities for institutions of higher education. We all strive to be inclusive and diverse. By leveraging our collections as cultural collections we provide an avenue of hands-on exploration for our students and communities demonstrating this value.

With a move to knowledge creation, working with cultural collections and communities may create new research understanding, which may generate grant funding opportunities. Shining a light on our cultural collections creates interest in our institutions and may provide a source of marketing promotion that is newsworthy.

We have a social responsibility to preserve and present our cultural holdings for the benefit of the peoples who donated and are represented within the contents of the collections. Cultural collections are not discipline specific and by creating access multiple disciplines may add data and knowledge, such as GIS or demographic datasets, which enhance the understanding of the materials or linked open data for cross collection connections.

Finally, as noted in the many examples previously mentioned, libraries already “own” cultural collections, so getting started exploring the potential of your holdings requires only imagination and time for something that may return an enormous value to your campus and contribute to student success.--*heroldi@hawaii.edu*



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