

11-1-2014

Let's get this party started: Celebrating faculty authors in the library

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Repository Citation

Bonnet, Jennifer; Alvarez, Barbara; and Cordell, Sigrid, "Let's get this party started: Celebrating faculty authors in the library" (2014). *Library Staff Publications*. 20.

https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/lib_staffpub/20

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Jennifer Bonnet, Barbara Alvarez, and Sigrid Anderson Cordell

Let's get this party started

Celebrating faculty authors in the library

In recent years, academics and publishing professionals have been grappling with questions about the long-term viability of book publishing. Despite this uncertainty, faculty members continue to produce numerous monographs each year. Librarians regularly purchase these titles to meet teaching and research demands and to showcase the range and depth of scholarship taking place on our campuses. Whereas the science library at the University of Michigan has pioneered efforts to track and showcase its faculty scholarship, particularly in the realm of journal literature, until the summer of 2012 there was no systematic attempt to collect, highlight, and celebrate the work of faculty authors who publish monographs in the humanities, international studies, and social sciences.

In light of the academic library's role in supporting scholarly work, and, in particular, the library's emphasis on creating strong relationships with academic departments, we recognized that it was essential that our library take a more active role in drawing attention to faculty book publications. This article outlines our approach and the advantages of these efforts for developing relationships between the library and academic departments.

Scoping out the field

During the last few decades, academic libraries have attempted to capture and highlight faculty publications in a variety of ways. Initiatives have primarily focused on the design of bibliographies to track and promote campus scholarship, as well as to inform collection building. Various tools have been used to accomplish these goals, including citation managers like ProCite¹ or Refworks,² open access

options like wikis³ or institutional repositories,⁴ database management systems like Microsoft Access,⁵ and even home-grown products, like the custom-built database at Touro College.⁶

Several of these initiatives have expanded to add interactive elements to their faculty recognition efforts. These include annual library gatherings that recognize faculty authorship,⁷ as well as exhibits of faculty publications, such as the temporary displays of faculty books at Boise State University's annual faculty reception⁸ and at Touro College's faculty development events.⁹

In an attempt to recognize the wide range of contributions in monograph publishing at our institution, we built on, and extended, the efforts described above through the design of a permanent physical and digital display of faculty-authored books. Additionally, we organized an annual authors' celebration that serves as an opportunity to strengthen our liaison and outreach relationships across campus and personalize both our collections and the scholarly output of our faculty.

Project goal and implementation

Our primary goal has been to enhance outreach to departments through an initiative that not only increases the visibility of faculty work on campus, but also provides new opportunities to engage faculty with the physical library.

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To accomplish this aim, we began with a twofold approach. First, we identified a space in the library where we could install a permanent physical exhibit of new faculty books from the library's collections. We chose a location strategically positioned near a well-traveled area of the reference desk. Thus, the exhibit is accessible and visible to current and prospective students and faculty, community visitors, and tour groups. In addition to a bookcase that presents an attractive arrangement of the monographs, there are comfortable arm-chairs adjacent to the books for relaxing or reading.

Second, we designed a digital analogue of the physical exhibit to provide more complete coverage of faculty book publications. Rotating cover images and bibliographic information are displayed on an LCD screen mounted

above the bookcase. Because some of our faculty books are born-digital publications, and the print books are part of our circulating collection, this digital exhibit ensures that books in all formats are featured, regardless of whether they are checked out.

Reception

To publicize this initiative, and further recognize the myriad contributions that faculty make in the realm of scholarly publishing, we organized a Faculty Authors Celebration to honor faculty who had published books in the previous calendar year. The reception took place at the end of April, shortly after the end of the semester, in hopes of attracting as many

faculty as possible before they left town for the summer. Both print and electronic invitations were designed in-house and shared with department heads, faculty authors, campus deans, and library staff.

The event was held in the gallery space of the Graduate Library, which allowed for an extensive physical display of faculty-authored books, tables for eating and mingling, a

speaker's corner, background music, and a large screen to display the rotating book covers. Throughout the afternoon, members of university administration, library staff, and members of the community socialized and listened to short talks by invited speakers. A highlight of the event was a raffle for faculty-authored books, where prize winners were able to choose a book from the range of publications featured at the event (delighting both the

winners and the authors). Anecdotally speaking, this was a fun, lively event that not only generated buzz within the library but also across campus.

In order to make the event a success, and to ensure that all faculty authors felt celebrated at the event, it was crucial to represent all new faculty books in some form. While the realities of our circulating collection meant that it was not possible for us to have all of the physical books at the reception, we took special care to make sure that we had proxies of all books in some tangible form. Thus, alongside the book display, we featured color prints of the covers for books not currently available. All titles were also listed in the event's program



Publicity image on the library website featuring faculty-authored books.

offered to guests. During the formal remarks, we pointed out that books not on the table were absent because they were checked out, an observation that pleased the faculty authors and emphasized that these books were not just part of a display, but part of an ongoing scholarly conversation.

The reception created a moment for people from across campus to celebrate the accomplishments of their colleagues, chat with each other, and interact in a comfortable, welcoming space. This event served as a reminder of the library's collaborative, supportive role in their academic pursuits and in their many successes.

Challenges and opportunities: Collaborating to discover faculty publications

As noted by multiple authors who described their efforts at gathering information about faculty-authored works, comprehensive coverage of faculty publications is extremely difficult.¹⁰ No single method of discovery suffices to ensure capturing a complete set of data. On a large and decentralized campus such as ours, this task can seem insurmountable.

We set out to tackle this difficult issue by brainstorming all of the viable ways we could gather book publication information. Automated methods, such as cross-searching Worldcat data against the campus directory database or mining our primary book vendor database, proved grossly insufficient, unreliable, and very time-consuming, especially at the stage of eliminating false positive results. In the end, the most effective method of collecting this information turned out to be the tried and true human approach, namely the collaboration with our subject librarian colleagues who work directly with academic departments and can obtain such information on an ongoing basis.

To ensure that no book publication passes unnoticed, we contact faculty members, department chairs, and administrative staff via their respective subject librarians twice per year to ask for lists of new book publications. Our message always includes an invitation

to faculty to self-report their new titles by sending us an email. We make a final sweep at the close of the calendar year when we start to prepare for the spring reception and send out personal invitations to authors and department chairs. The invitation to the reception invariably prompts another wave of new title reports. As this initiative becomes an established annual tradition, we hope that more faculty authors will develop the habit of sharing information about their upcoming publications with the library.

In addition, we discovered in conversations with the editors from our university press that they are in an excellent position to provide us with information about upcoming faculty monographs. We are currently working to develop a model of communication with the press that would be effective and easily sustainable in alerting us to new faculty publications.

Future directions

Timing

One of the major challenges to this project has been the timing of the annual celebration of faculty authors. With the variety of events that concurrently take place at the end of each semester, we decided to move the celebration from April to March in the second year of this initiative. However, we noticed that participation remained steady at approximately 50 attendees, rather than increasing as we had hoped. We are continuing to attempt to raise awareness of this event, avoid potential scheduling conflicts, and encourage greater participation.

Scope of invitations

For our first two events, we limited our invitation list to faculty authors, department chairs, deans, and library staff. As a result, the reception offered an ideal opportunity for librarians to engage with faculty authors and department heads. As we plan future events, however, we are considering broadening our invitation list to include all faculty and graduate students from departments represented at the event. The advantage of

inviting more of our colleagues from across campus is that it will raise the visibility of the event, give faculty authors a stronger sense of being recognized by their peers, and engage a larger cross-section of the campus.

Personal contact

Throughout the development of this project, we have drawn on our network of subject specialists, and their relationships with their departments, to identify new works for the exhibit. As noted, this approach has provided us with the fullest list to date of new faculty books. Another occasion where personal contact has made a difference has come in the form of RSVP requests to our annual faculty author celebration. Responses to these requests have remained low during the two years since the event's inception. However, participation has noticeably risen when subject specialists sent personal invitations to encourage their faculty members to attend. This is an opportunity we will continue to explore as we consider ways to involve more members of the campus community in this event.

Conclusion: Impact on outreach

During the last two years, we have seen consistent numbers of attendees at the spring celebration of faculty authors, and statistics show that faculty books in the display are circulating at a respectable rate. Ninety percent of the 2013 and 2014 books on our faculty shelf have circulated at least once, and 50% of them have circulated three or more times. This is a considerably higher circulation rate than 2013 and 2014 books from our general collection, 16% of which have circulated at least once and only 1% of which have circulated more than three times. We anticipate that these higher circulation numbers for books on our faculty bookshelf reflect the impact of this initiative on the visibility of faculty-authored monographs.

Perhaps the most significant and long-lasting impact of a program such as this one is the hardest to quantify: the increased opportunities for conversations with fac-

ulty and departmental contacts. When our liaisons contact their departments to learn about new publications, there is an opening for a conversation about the library's interest in faculty work, as well as a chance for a shared moment of celebration. In communicating with departments, we heard repeatedly from chairs and administrators that they were both excited and grateful that we had launched this initiative. In some cases, faculty members contacted us to make sure that we knew about their colleagues' work. Likewise, the reception served as a gathering place not only to celebrate the scholarly and creative work taking place on campus, but also to mingle with faculty members in a relaxed setting.

At a time when researchers sometimes feel like the library as a physical space is less relevant to them because they have books delivered to their offices, or they regularly use online resources, a celebration like this one points to the library's active involvement in supporting scholarly and creative output on campus.

Notes

1. Carol Fenichel, "Combining Reference with Collection Development: Using Pro-Cite to Produce a Faculty Bibliography and as an Aid in Journal Selection," *Medical Reference Services Quarterly* 9, no. 1 (1990): 70. doi:10.1300/J115v09n01_06; Lyn MacCorkle, "Publishing an Annual Faculty Bibliography at the University of Miami," *Information Technology and Libraries* 10, no. 2 (1991): 122.
2. Scott Marsalis and Julia Kelly, "Building a RefWorks Database of Faculty Publications as a Liaison and Collection Development Tool," *Issues in Science and Technology Librarianship* 40 (Summer 2004): 2. doi:10.5062/F4QZ27WK
3. Elizabeth Connor, "Using Wiki Technology to Build a Faculty Publications Database," *Journal of Electronic Resources in Medical Libraries* 4, no. 4 (2008): 16. doi:10.1300/J383v04n04_02.

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Cosmic Reflections while you enjoy the best tea in Portland. Stop into the Pendleton flagship store for a lovely selection of goods from the iconic Oregon company. (*Bus, MAX, Streetcar*)

With its high-rise condos, wall-to-wall shopping, and endless dining options, the **Pearl District** is one of Bridgetown's most urban residential centers. Any visitor's first stop should be to the legendary Powell's Bookstore. You may need a whole day to explore the exceptional selection of books, gifts, zines, and maps. A shoppers paradise, the Pearl is home to outdoorsy shops like REI, Patagonia, and North Face, as well as retailers like West Elm and Anthropologie. Antique and interior design shops abound. Paper aficionados will love Oblation Papers & Press, a letterpress print shop, paper maker, and retail store. Stroll down the South Park Blocks to watch the old-timers playing Bocce, tech workers eating lunch, and young neighborhood kids on the playgrounds. Nestled on a corner next to the blocks is the historic DeSoto Building, which hosts high-profile art institutions like Blue Sky Photography Gallery, Charles A. Hartman Fine Art, The Museum of Contemporary Craft, and Augen Gallery.

A bit further out from the city center is one of Portland's original destination neighborhoods, the **Northwest District/ Nob Hill** district. NW 23rd and 21st streets feature high-end boutiques like the jewelry haven Twist as well national retailers like Urban Outfitters, Restoration Hardware, and Pottery Barn. Historic homes and elegant vintage apartment buildings line the side streets. Catch the most recent indie documentary at Cinema 21. With breathtaking views of the surrounding forests, bridges, and mountains, the vast historic Pittock Mansion is another must-see jewel of the city. (*Bus, Streetcar*)

Find your own adventure at those described here or go off the beaten path by exploring other the notable neighborhoods, such as St. Johns/North Portland, Upper Burnside/Laurelhurst, Alameda/Fremont, Montavilla, Williams, Woodstock, Sellwood /Moreland, and so many more. Whether you prefer the bustling vibe of an urban center or a quiet encounter with one of the many Bridgetown parks, there's a neighborhood in Portland waiting for you to explore. And remember, we'll be profiling the bars, breweries, and restaurants in these neighborhoods in an upcoming article. *ZZ*

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4. Michelle Armstrong and Julia Stringfellow, "Promoting Faculty Scholarship through the University Author Recognition Bibliography at Boise State University," *New Review of Academic Librarianship* 18, no. 2 (2012): 171. doi:10.1080/13614533.2012.717901.

5. Bai, Sheryl, and Pamela Kelly, "Development of a Web-based faculty publications database," *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association* 88, no. 2 (2000): 189.

6. Sara Tabaei et al., "Building a Faculty Publications Database: A Case Study," *Public Services Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (2013): 200. doi:10.1080/15228959.2013.816127.

7. Connor, "Using Wiki Technology," 16.

8. Julia Stringfellow and Michelle Armstrong, "The University Authors Recognition

Reception at Boise State University: A Celebration of Scholarship," *The Idaho Librarian* 62, no. 1 (2012): 2. <http://theidaholibrarian.wordpress.com/2012/05/09/the-university-authors-recognition-reception-at-boise-state-university-a-celebration-of-scholarship>.

9. Tabaei et al., "Building a Faculty Publications Database," 202.

10. Barbara Blummer, "The Availability of Faculty Publication Databases from Library Web Pages," *Journal of Web Librarianship* 1, no. 2 (2007): 35. doi:10.1300/J502v01n02_03; Vanette Schwartz and Bruce Stoffel, "Building an Online Faculty Publications Database," *College & Undergraduate Libraries* 14, no. 3 (2007): 5. doi:10.1300/J106v14n03_01. *ZZ*