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Library Connection, v6n2, Spring 2019

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Scientific Study, Conservation, and Interpretation of the American Mastodon

UNI Museum's mastodon tusk exhibit was unveiled to the public in early April, showcasing the collective effort of three years and a countless number of hours to bring the 120,000-200,000-year-old artifact back to life. The exhibit includes state-of-the-art materials like a climate-controlled display case, an interactive digital display to explore the tusk, and a custom mount. A grant from the Roy J. Carver Charitable Trust in 2016 provided the opportunity for "Scientific Study, Conservation, and Interpretation" of the tusk, and along with it, the potential for collaboration with a number of groups both inside and outside of the community.

Partnerships with Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminology, Chemistry and Biochemistry, and Biology provided assistance with various aspects of the research and unique learning opportunities for students. Other collaboration included working with The South

Dakota School of Mines and Bio-Tech X-ray Inc. to identify structural damage to the tusk and optimize the conservation process. These collective efforts to conserve and study the tusk are a strong demonstration of UNI Museum's dedication to the preservation of Iowa's natural history and the community's ability to concentrate specialized resources for valuable

projects like the exhibit. Student engagement was also a key focus throughout the project as original research on the tusk contributed to unique, educational opportunities in Culture Lab, a specially-equipped room for museum



research and learning. For the future, UNI Museum works to provide excellent opportunities to educate the next-generation of museum professionals and the general public.

Virtual Reality: exploring digital world

The role of digital technology in academic learning has been a growing endeavor, especially in the past few years as technology costs have become more affordable. Equipment such as Oculus Rift, Google Cardboard, and Microsoft HoloLens allows users to experience the world of virtual reality, immersing them in environments they would perhaps be unable to explore otherwise.

In fall 2018, Rod Library purchased an Oculus Rift VR set and began offering its capabilities to students, faculty, and staff. In an interview, Rick Seeley, Manager of Instructional Technology Research and Development at UNI, talked about the role of advanced technology in education:



"With technologies like the Oculus Rift and Microsoft HoloLens, one of the ideas was to see how the technology could be used to engage student understanding of a particular subject using virtual reality. For example, instead of seeing a chemical bond as a 2D print on a piece of paper, imagine being able to see it in 3D, walk around it, walk through it, interact with it, and modify it in a fully immersive environment. As for the boundaries of how this technology could be used, it is really up to your imagination."

These technologies provide unique learning opportunities like immersive language learning, virtual surgeries, and architectural modeling, just to name a few. Students and faculty are able to recommend purchases of specific software games and programs that contribute to different forms of learning. The Oculus Rift and other VR technology is just the beginning of finding creative ways to enhance student learning. Stop by the Digital Media Hub to make a reservation!

Treasuring Student Success

Setting the bar high for non-traditional students, Joyce Hunter, a family services major, is a part-time undergraduate student with one semester between her and graduation. Joyce has been a frequent patron at Rod Library, researching and writing papers for classes, and has been noticed by faculty around the building: "Joyce has certainly climbed some mountains since she started here. She may spend more hours in the library than I do," joked Chris Neuhaus, a Research and User Services Librarian. Joyce's experience in Rod Library reflects her focus as a student committed to learning: "A college education is something that should be absolutely treasured. At first, I didn't think I was UNI material, but support from my professors and the library -- they show the same heartfelt care for students of all backgrounds -- and I live here; the library is my second home."

Joyce also gave a thankful shout-out to Claire Bowling, Chris Neuhaus, Anne Marie Gruber, and Angie Cox, all Library faculty and staff with specialized knowledge and specific skills for research:

"If not for them, I don't think I'd be here."



When asked about advice for other undergraduate students, Joyce said, "Not everything can be Googled -- engaging with staff is essential because most of the answers you're looking for are right here."

Spring Graduates

Alex Hlavacek, a Marketing and Communications Intern for Library Public Relations, is majoring in communication and minoring in leisure, youth, and human services. As an intern, she creates digital content for library events and creates signage for special events. One of her favorite moments in the library was working on Rod Con 2019 materials: "I got to create the Rod Con 2019 booklet; seeing it in the hands of over a thousand people was a cool moment. I thought, wow, I made that." When the Library isn't bustling with big crowds and special events,



Alex said, "It's a great place for group projects--it has such a friendly atmosphere that my friends and I always end up studying there one time or another throughout the week." Thinking of graduation in May, Alex will be on the look-out for an 'in' with an admissions team, ideally at a place like her pre-transfer community college, Kirkwood in Cedar Rapids: ***"After I graduated from high school, my parents moved to Missouri. My time at Kirkwood and UNI has made me want to stay here in Iowa; it just feels like home."***

Canada-born graphic design student Craig Johnson has been a Rod Library Public Relations Library Student Assistant since Fall 2016, he has designed a wide variety of digital media for library events and communications. When asked about his time at Rod Library he shared, "It taught me how to work with a company with such a rigorous brand standard...high standards can feel limiting, but this job taught me to work with them and still make content graphically appealing." As for post-graduation plans, Craig hopes to



find a permanent place with a Cedar Rapids non-profit, NewBo City Market, where he is currently an intern. Craig's advice to undergraduates is to utilize the library's resources: ***"Academic libraries are way more than just books; there is just so much more you can do here than people know. We've even got VR***

NEW SPRING 2019



Laptops are now available for long-term check-out. Patrons can now enjoy Internet access beyond the physical boundaries of the library.



Special Collections & University Archives received Preservation Assistance Grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities totaling \$5,986.

COMING FALL 2019



Culture Lab, a research and conservation space of UNI Museum, will be open to the public and ready for use in fall 2019.