Book Card Curtain

Created in 2023 by Sara Howe, a Rod Library Student Assistant, the piece is made up of book cards with various found plants printed on them from a process known as cyanotype. This process consists of a mixture of chemicals that, when combined, become light-sensitive and allow the images to be printed on paper. Intending to use this project to develop Howe's understanding of the cyanotype process, they incorporated additional sculptural elements by experimenting with new printing materials, such as book cards.

The idea to print plants onto the book cards was inspired by Anna Atkins, who was known for documenting various plants through the cyanotype process in the 1800s. Sara's passion for art and dedication to service at Rod Library have been honored, with this piece being displayed on the learning commons art wall for all library users to enjoy. These rotating exhibits are another opportunity to showcase all of the wonderful work accomplished at UNI.
Navigating Information Overload

We are bombarded with information from the moment we wake up in the morning to the moment we go to sleep. But how many of us question the validity of the information we get through those technologies? In the last decade, with the rise of misinformation and, more recently, with the rise of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), it is essential to understand how to navigate an ever-evolving world of information.

Like you, the library's information literacy instruction program is not immune to the challenges presented by emerging technologies and information ecosystems, including AI. It requires us to shift our approach to supporting campus and student learning.

Examples of Questions Explored in Class Include:

✓ Does the medium through which you consume information matter?

✓ How has technology enhanced access to information and what barriers still exist?

✓ What are algorithms and how do they shape what we see?

✓ Should we care about privacy in the age of the internet?

✓ What is the current state of affairs related to AI and how could it shape the future of learning and work?

"I really liked the article "That's what you think." It made me THINK. Absolutely enjoyed reading it, it challenged my own personal views, opinions, ways of thinking, ways of reacting."

Thankfully, libraries have a guiding document created by the Association of College and Research Libraries to help with these changes - the Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education. The Framework describes a set of practices that have helped us adjust to challenges like fake news and misinformation and are just as applicable now as we continue to navigate changes presented by AI.

Navigating these changes is more complex than it sounds. It is much more complicated, and the implications are bleeding into education at all levels, even the traditional college research paper assignment. The library has developed one solution to help students navigate these changes through a new credit-bearing course in UNIFI (the gen ed requirement).

The class, "Question Everything: Navigating Information Overload," is a 3-credit course that is offered every fall and spring semester and is part of two UNIFI certificates - "Critical Thinking and Information Literacy" and "Data Science."

The class covers topics such as algorithms, bias, source credibility and authority, artificial intelligence, privacy and surveillance, censorship, and regulation, all of which are discussed through multiple lenses (i.e., economic, psychological, socio-cultural, (geo)political, legal, and ethical) as we help students peel back the layers of the information systems they use every day. The class relies heavily on class discussion, allowing students to practice engaging in civic discourse about complex, sometimes polarizing, topics.

Rod Library, like most libraries, is excellent at adapting. Another example of libraries sustaining the test of time is through the library instruction team's information literacy program plan. Libraries are essential regardless of the latest emerging technology. Their role is unchanged as libraries are still about connecting people with information, helping them navigate the vast amount of data at their fingertips, and sharing tips on improving their search skills to retrieve better results. With the new venture into teaching in UNIFI certificates, the goal is to help students build critical skills needed to become informed global citizens. Please visit our information literacy program webpage for more information about how this class fits into Rod Library's priorities.
In late 2022, Rod Library became a Member Library of HathiTrust. HathiTrust (www.hathitrust.org) is a global collaborative of research and academic libraries working to ensure that the cultural record is preserved and accessible long into the future. Launched in 2008, HathiTrust has a growing membership currently comprising more than two hundred libraries.

Over the last twelve years, members have contributed more than 18 million volumes to the digital library. HathiTrust offers reading access to the fullest extent allowable by U.S. copyright law, computational access to the entire corpus for scholarly research, and other emerging services based on the combined collection. More than 6.5 million of the contributed volumes are in the U.S. public domain and freely available online; Rod Library users can sign in and access all of these public domain items in full text. The content we don’t have full-text access to can still be used as a data source for digital humanities research and computational text analysis projects through the powerful HathiTrust Research Center toolkit.

While we joined too late to take advantage of this, it’s worthwhile to note that during the height of the COVID pandemic, HathiTrust provided Emergency Temporary Access Service to member libraries in the United States. Libraries that were closed to their users due to pandemic restrictions were authorized to provide temporary access to digital versions of items they held in their physical collections, even if these items were under copyright. While we hope this will never be required at the national level again, it's good to know that an individual member library facing a natural disaster can apply to HathiTrust for ETAS and keep serving its users.

As a trusted repository, HathiTrust guarantees the long-term preservation of the materials it holds, providing the expert curation and consistent access long associated with research libraries. Specialized features are also available which facilitate access by persons with print disabilities, and allow users to gather subsets of the digital library into “collections” that can be searched and browsed.

HathiTrust was named for the Hindi word for elephant, hathi, symbolic of the qualities of memory, wisdom, and strength evoked by elephants, as well as the huge undertaking of congregating the digital collections of libraries in the United States and beyond. More information on HathiTrust is available at: https://www.hathitrust.org/. You can access our HathiTrust portal and the research toolkit through the A-Z Databases list on the Rod Library website. Their website was redesigned a few months ago – take a look if you haven’t visited recently.
What is IRTS?

Originally a curriculum lab, the Instructional Resources and Technology Services (IRTS) unit in Schindler Education Center evolved to include educational technology, literacy education collections, a youth literature collection, enrichment resources, and much more. In 2016, the IRTS became a unit of Rod Library. As IRTS became more and more intertwined into the library's organization, it became clear that there was a good deal of overlap between the library's services and collections and the services and collections that we added with the addition of IRTS to the library.

What is the TEACH Project?

Recognizing that we might want to combine some of the overlapping collections and services to benefit our students and faculty, we took the opportunity to collaborate with the College of Education (COE) to create an updated vision for IRTS. Through the establishment of the IRTS Visioning Concept Team, led by Robin Dada (Head, Curriculum and Instruction) and Eric Jennings (Associate University Librarian for Learning and Research), we consulted and met regularly with the Director of IRTS and the Youth Services Librarian; consulted with School Library Studies Faculty; led eleven focus groups of interested parties - including students - in COE, IRTS, and the Library. The Team’s final report resulted in a recommendation to combine, improve, and elevate the similar aspects of IRTS and Rod Library's Youth Collection. So in 2022, Rod Library launched the Teacher Education and Collaboration Hub (TEACH) project with the overall goal of combining the IRTS Collection and Youth Collection in Schindler and creating a hub for teacher preparation and classroom experimentation in this new space.

The scope of this project is broad, so we are working through it slowly and strategically. In Phase I, led by our Youth Services Librarian, we consolidated the two Youth Literature collections focusing on removing unnecessary overlap and maintaining a strong model collection. This collection accounts for 40% of all library circulation! Phase II, comprising a collaborative team from the Library and the College of Education led by Eric Jennings and Benjamin Forsyth and including representatives from IRTS (Maxine Davis), IT (Farah Kashef), Educational Technology (Magda Galloway), and School Library Studies (Joan Bessman Taylor), and library instruction (Chris Neuhaus) focused on designing a responsive and flexible space that reflects a model school library with collections, services, technology, and spaces to support teacher preparation and classroom experimentation. Additionally, librarian Dr. Johnnie Blunt and IRTS Director Maxine Davis are spending time redefining the collections that reflect current content in classrooms - including updating the P-12 textbook collection and the professional development collection.

So, What's Next for IRTS?

Using the report from the Phase II team and the existing footprint of the IRTS space in Schindler, we worked with an architect to create a design to support this project. We now have a set of designs that are based on best practices in library spaces with attention to our goals for collections, services, technology, spaces. We are excited to see the space opened up with better flow to the Schindler lobby, new collaborative spaces, and an emphasis on technology without losing sight of the importance of comfortable and cozy areas for group reading and book talks. We continue to gather feedback and input from students, faculty, and everyone that is close to this project and look forward to seeing this project through in 2024.
Every year, the library awards three students to recognize and celebrate the extraordinary research, scholarship, and creative work happening at UNI. Students who used library resources for projects from Spring 2023 through Spring 2024 are encouraged to apply for this cash award.

The application process is open and can be completed at any time. Applications received prior to the cut-off date of April 15, 2024, will be considered for the 2023-24 award cycle. Any received after the cut-off date will be added to next year’s award cycle.

Mary Ann Bolton Research Award

Collections
- 7,978 Materials circulated
- 141,147 Library database searches
- 538,212 ScholarWorks downloads

Services
- 4,369 Reference Interactions
- 139 Instruction sessions
- 3,196 Student attendees of instruction sessions

Spaces
- 126,900 Visitors to Rod Library (including IRTS and the Marshall Center School)
- 14,979 Public computer logins
- 6,627 Study and meeting rooms reserved
- 34,758 Social media reach and impressions

Upcoming Events

/ RodCon 2024
April 6, 2024

/ Inspire Conference
April 8-9, 2024

/ National Library Week
April 7-13, 2024

/ 2024 Mary Ann Bolton Undergraduate Research Award application deadline
April 15, 2024
Highlight: Building Histories

Did you know that the original campus Greenhouse was built for $300.00 in 1907 next to the East Gymnasium? Did you know that the East Gymnasium is now the Innovative Teaching and Technology Center or ITTC? And before there was the Curris Business Building, there was Prexy’s Pond - a place for students to swim in the summer, canoe in the fall, and skate in the winter! Did you know that the original Gilchrist Hall - including the Gilchrist Chapel, a planetarium - burned down in 1972?

For a walk down memory lane or if you’re just wondering how and when our campus evolved to what it is today, check out the extensive list of Building Histories compiled over the years by our staff in Special Collections & University Archives.

Johnnie Blunt

Dr. Johnnie Blunt is the new Librarian for Education & Youth Services. He brings experience as an academic librarian from both Oakland University and University of Michigan - Dearborn.

Dr. Blunt comes to UNI with three graduate degrees - a Master of Arts in English Literature from Roosevelt University, a Master of Library and Information Science from Wayne State University, and a Doctorate in Literacy, Culture and Language from Oakland University (Dr. Blunt’s dissertation was Literacy and Liberation: A Content Analysis of Four Antebellum Slave Narratives as Sites of Critical Literacy).

For academic year 2023-2024 Dr. Blunt is headquartered in the Rod Library Youth Collection (Rod Library 349) with satellite hours in the IRTS (Schindler 202). In both location he provides research consultations to students and faculty in the College of Education, manages collections for Youth Services, and mentors doctoral students in the EdD program.

In the coming year Dr. Blunt will oversee the blending of the Rod Library Youth Collection and the Instructional Resources and Technology Services as these units combine to become the new Teacher Education and Collaboration Hub housed on the main floor of Schindler.