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The Shapiro Design Lab Residency

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THE SHAPIRO DESIGN LAB RESIDENCY

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN LIBRARY

2016 | 2017





DIRECTOR'S NOTE



The idea of a Residency program within the nascent and ever-evolving Shapiro Design Lab was very much an experiment. While academic libraries support student work of all kinds and in many different ways, we wanted to see what would result from a more intentional and explicit project incubator environment. This environment would not only draw upon the myriad expertise within the Library, but live between and beyond conventional departmental and disciplinary spaces. Drawing on the concept of both a medical residency (where one spends a significant amount of time embedded and invested within a particular place) and an artist residency (where one has a time-limited but often intensely productive space to work on a project), the Residency brought together students—RJ, Rebecca, Maggie, Caroline, Alexis, and Carolyn—from across the Undergraduate, Masters, and Doctoral programs of the University, to take up creative residency in the Design Lab for the academic year. In addition, Brandon and Shira served as Program Assistants to develop the vision and coordinate the day-to-day activities of the Residency. They will detail their Residency experiences in their own words in the pages ahead.

I was amazed at how quickly these students became a close-knit and supportive community, seemingly in a matter of weeks, which only grew stronger over the course of the next six months. Working side by side, they developed engaged learning projects that explored their academic and creative ambitions, from black women's hashtag activism to transformed patterns of journalism engagement to preserving and recreating important objects of printing history. These projects put forward a multitude of ideas, representations, and interventions through a wide range of tools and media, highlighting the core value and purpose of the Lab: learning through making, doing, and sharing. Together, these projects reflect the exciting interdisciplinarity and the surprising connections that emerge from collaboration, community, and the Library.

This initial cohort developed the idea of a Residency in ways I could not imagine, and while each subsequent cohort will be unique, the experience gained and lessons learned from working with this initial cohort showed so much about what students can achieve within these kinds of supportive environments. I hope you enjoy reading about their experiences as much as I enjoyed being part of them.


Justin Schell



3 SHAPRO DESIGN LAB



SHAPRO DESIGN LAB

DESIGN LAB PROGRAM ASSISTANTS



BRANDON PATTERSON & SHIRA SCHWARTZ

Brandon Patterson—It was a pleasure working on big ideas with incredible individuals during the inaugural year of the Residency program in the Design Lab. Over the course of the program, the Residency grew as a community of learners explored questions around news, health, art + reflection, incarceration, education, and access. They challenged ideas, lifted each other up, and supported their communities. The residents connected to resources throughout campus and the community to gain insight into their projects. They wrote reflections via blog posts and conversed over social media. The learning that happened in the residency was in person, it was virtual, and it was through doing – a true engaged learning experience.

By the end of the year, the Residency began to feel like home. The Residents were able to claim space in the library, make it their own, and were given the opportunity to play in the space. They (re)learned how to sew, made personalized handprinted artworks, recorded sound bites, and discussed topics relevant to the now. This all happened while sharing a

communal meal, making it feel like being around the table in someone's home. Much like a home, there were teaching moments and moments filled with stress. There was guidance and uncertainty. Throughout the experience, there always seemed to be a sense of gratitude in the space, that we were thankful for being in a room with other passionate people who were supportive and wanted to see us succeed.

Brandon Patterson completed two Master's degrees in Education and Information, and is working with engaged learning spaces as a Technology Engagement Librarian at the Eccles Health Sciences Library at the University of Utah.

Shira Schwartz—The Shapiro Design Lab Residency empowers students to explore their ideas creatively and to expand their possibilities for learning across divisions, tools, and resources. It enables students from across academic majors and stages to imagine their growth and scholarly contributions in new terms, while still operating within the structure of the institution. Fundamental to the success of this work has been our ability to consider new ways of engaging knowledge and community, both within the institution and by extending ourselves beyond its borders into our surrounding communities. The most profound thing that came out of this Residency was the radically new sense of connectivity. The connections that were sparked

between ideas, disciplines, people, projects and communities, transformed the possibilities of student work and of learning. To me, learning is about forging new connections, and the Residency allowed us to do this by breaking out of educational norms and reconfiguring how we might relate to each other, to knowledge, and to the broader mission of higher education. The connection to the personal is what has made such a difference in the learning that has happened here. It has allowed us to move from the mere acquisition of knowledge to actual growth and transformation. Our Residents have been encouraged to bring themselves to the Design Lab and emboldened to generate their work out of a sense of who they are and how they see the world.

Shira Schwartz is a doctoral student in the Comparative Literature department, and previously founded and led Detroit City Study, an academic co-working space in Detroit that operates as a collaborative workplace for place-based research, engaging urban researchers, students, and community members.



Sit On It
Detroit

SHAPIRO DESIGN LAB RESIDENCY

FINAL EXHIBITION AND OPENING RECEPTION

Co-Working sessions were held weekly and gave Residents the opportunity to work on their projects alongside each other, trying out ideas in a friendly and supportive environment.

One resident would be talking through an idea or process, while another Resident would be teaching others about how to do a particular thing in Photoshop or some other software program. It was also a chance to chat and catch up about how things were going in their lives beyond the Residency.

COMMUNITY
LEARNING
INCLUSIVITY

SHARING OPTIONS
INTERDISCIPLINARITY
CROSSING BORDERS

CO WORKING

CO LEARNING

SKILLS
CHALLENGES

RESEARCH
CREATION
INFORMATION

Whereas Co-Working sessions were more informal, Co-Learning sessions were more formal learning opportunities for the Residents both to learn new things and share what they already knew with the rest of the group. Developed by Shira Schwartz as part of her Detroit City Study project, these sessions included an overview of letterpress printing, how to use the Arduino microcontroller, and less technical (but equally important) skills such as collaborative network building and reflective writing.



MEET THE RESIDENTS

MAGGIE CEASE

Maggie's project is an on-the-go podcast that showcases the future of education.

DR. REBECCA CHUNG

Dr. Chung's project is a preservation-translation innovation that uses 3D printers to remake type for preserving withered texts.

CAROLYN GEARIG

Carolyn's project is a website that showcases how Michiganders use their news through audio interviews.

CAROLINE HENDERSON

Caroline's project includes an exploration of prison design and its impact on inmates' mental health.

RJ MILES

RJ's project features a re-collective healing series on the repurposing of paper to reclaim the body through ink and letterpress.

ALEXIS STANTON

Alexis' project entails a reflective self-care space that weaves together our use of digital technologies, community, and self-making.

DR. REBECCA CHUNG

2016-17 Shapiro Design Lab Resident
MSI, School of Information

LEAD-TO-PIXELS

Started in 2015, the goal of the Lead-to-Pixels Project (L2P) has been to rethink the relationship between digitization and making, using the hand-printed book as our case study. Digital images of books do not recreate the feel of paper and ink or teach readers about the relief processes through which all typography and graphic design evolved into their modern forms. Creative use of digital technologies, however, can restore the thingness of print objects, and make the historical relationships among technologies a live object for education and research.

This project tells the story—from my book-history and Shakespeare background in research, to the letterpress skills I have developed at the University while studying preservation at the School of Information. The enclosures show lead-based printing techniques (blocks and handset type), and the digital surrogates developed to help preserve those aspects of the material and visual history of written culture, difficult to migrate through digital imaging alone. Every enclosure is also a test of properties: First-Folio copper blocks made from both bitmap and SVG files, PLA versus other 3D-printing filaments, proof or edition printing. Prints were made at the three letterpress studios available at the University: The Wolverine Press, the new books-arts Alternative Press studio at the Duderstadt Center, and the rolling-pin press at the Design Lab.

Last year, the Lead-to-Pixels Project used digital images to remake ornamental blocks from Shakespeare's First Folio and the second quarto of Hamlet, using both commercial photoengraving processes and 3D printing. This year, we began trying to remake type and dies using not only digital files, but computer-controlled carving machines, laser cutters, and 3D printers. Of the three, 3D-printer use yielded the breakthrough, in combination with consultation and help from



ArtsEngine and engineering undergraduate Aaron Chow. We were able to customize a 3D printer for letterpress applications (while still usable for Aaron's biomedical-research projects). The customization allows for new filaments to be used as type and die materials: bamboo, rosewood, steel and copper. Our work withstands use on standard letterpress equipment (flatbed and platen presses, galley and chase lockup).

“

I WONDER WHAT THE COST IS, WHEN WE BURROW SO DEEPLY IN OUR AREAS OF STUDY AT THE EXPENSE OF UNDERSTANDING METHODS AND TEACHINGS OF OTHER DISCIPLINES?

”

MICHIGAN TIME

My work, the Michigan Time Podcast, explores the future of education at the University of Michigan through ten-minute, interview-based episodes.

These short, bite-sized, ten-minute-long episodes are designed to be consumed via earbuds, headphones, or car stereos in those ten-minute intervals known as Michigan Time. They are designed to be consumed while walking to class, driving to meetings, or riding the bus across campus. They are designed to be consumed by listeners independently, to spark new curiosity, and then to spur conversation.

Returning to higher education as a Master of Social Work student means not only my delving deeply into a specific area of interest, but also exploring the breadth of knowledge that the University of Michigan campus community has to offer more generally. I am captivated by the medium of audio interviewing as a way to explore this breadth. Radio producer David Isay once stated that “the soul is contained in the human voice.” This quality, combined with audio’s unique ability to be consumed while people are otherwise going about their days, makes it a special medium that simultaneously connects and unites individuals with one another while also allowing space for their independence.

MAGGIE CEASE

2016-17 Shapiro Design Lab Resident
Pursuing an MSW in the School of Social Work
and a Master of Business Administration in
the Ross School of Business



The Michigan Time Podcast episodes are designed not to delve deeply into any one specific area, but rather to explore the educational breadth that the University of Michigan offers, and to provide brief glimpses into what this University community may look like in years to come.

“

ARE BLACK WOMEN
POTENTIALLY CURATING
SELF-DEFINITION ONLINE,
CULTIVATING
HEALING, AFFIRMING, AND
AUTHENTIC SOCIAL MEDIA
SPACES?

”



ALEXIS STANTON

2016-17 Shapiro Design Lab Resident
Collaborations: Pretty Brown Girl Club + Sit On
It Detroit + Heidelberg Project

Pursuing a Master of Public Health in Health
Behavior and Health Education

DIGITAL CONNECTIONS

My work in the Design Lab has been an exploratory research project defining and understanding the role of digital self-care in the lives of Black women. I have built upon my previous research examining whether or not social media provides an empowering space for Black women's creation of their own self-definitions through understanding how Black women may foster community online (e.g., hashtag activism, participation in virtual communities/blogs, etc.). Ultimately, I am interested in the role that social media may play in Black women's identity constructions, as well as the overall mental health implications.

Through informal interviews and dialogue, I asked young Black women aged 18-30 to self-conceptualize the concept of digital self-care – providing examples of the role that digital/social media engagement may play in their own lives. Through these conversations, the interviewees and I created a working definition of digital self-care, including but not limited to: (1) production of online social spaces that are healing, authentic, and affirming (e.g., empowering hashtags as vectors?); (2) utilizing digital media and/or social media platforms as outlets for self-expression and self-definition; and (3) cultivating digital community.

This project includes themes and definitions that emerged from the interviews. It is meant to immerse the audience in their own process of self-definition, reflection, and self-care engagement. My hope is that students will connect with this project through exploring the possibilities of engaging and creating empowering digital media spaces.

“

WHAT REMAINED CONSTANT
IS THIS SENSE OF
COLLABORATION AND
SUPPORT AND
CONTINUAL ARTISTIC AND
CREATIVE INNOVATION AND
DISSEMINATION.

”

RJ MILES

2016-17 Shapiro Design Lab Resident
Collaborations: Pretty Brown Girl Club +
Heidelberg Project

Pursuing a PhD in Social Work

RE+ COLLECTION

My work is about time—a culmination of past, present, and future selves. These “selves” work in tandem in an attempt to reconcile un+attended, un+resolved and, in some way, un+known elements that only materialize when faced with adversary, love, desperation, and delight.

Re+collection is the culmination of three distinct yet connected projects - Echo, The History of the World, and House of Soul on Fire. Each of these projects highlight the importance of collaboration, history and erasure, and construction of self.

I utilize paper as the primary medium in most of my work. While the re+use and re+purposing of class notes and letters were the initial impetus of the project, the work has begun to transform and materialize. From my perspective, paper and its re+use inherently makes it fragile. In much of my work, paper is overlaid with colorful script, shapes, and letterpress.

Despite its outward appearance, the “work” put in and on the paper “damages” it. In my work, paper represents the body and the overlay illustrates the day-to-day life of humans, which includes the pursuit of knowledge and education. The more we know the more bodies seem to suffer. I use acrylic as a way to prevent further damage to the paper, be observed, and no longer obligated to be overlaid with a colorful veneer (learn). In its stillness, it simply stands as a teaching tool. A historical narrative. A piece of art.



“

WHAT IS THE POINT OF
EDUCATION AND
INFORMATION IF IT
DOES NOT REACH
THOSE
OUTSIDE OF
ITS PRODUCERS?

”



CAROLYN GEARIG

2016-17 Shapiro Design Lab Resident



Graduated with a Bachelor's of Science from
the School of Information

MICHIGAN SPEAKS

I applied to this residency with a question: how can I, a college senior working in journalism postgrad, explore the gap between people and journalism?

Journalism and information play a part in most people's lives. The news determines to some extent what information we are exposed to and thus, what decisions we make, what we see as important and what our perspective is on the world. I first thought about looking at information access solely in Ann Arbor, but the 2016 presidential election made me realize that many journalists seem out of touch with many groups of people in this country. I decided to broaden my scope to the state as a whole.

I spent the past several months interviewing 18 people from across Michigan – who do not work in journalism – about the role it plays in their lives. Michigan is an interesting case study for this project. The Upper Peninsula is nearly 100% white, Detroit is the largest black majority city in the country, and Dearborn has largest proportion of Arab American residents of any city in the US. Percentage-wise, it was the closest swing state in the 2016 election.

My project explores different ways journalism impacts the lives of people with differing identities and hometowns. These conversations have pushed me to consider the ways in which we get our information, who controls these sources, and how they are constructed. I have spent much of college working in journalism with other journalists, and with this residency I challenged myself to see it from other perspectives. Journalism and information have a role in everyone's lives, and with this project I hope to stimulate more conversation on what this role is and why it matters.

“

SOMETHING ABOUT
THIS TYPE OF SHARING,
GROWING,
LEARNING,
AND NOURISHING OF
SELF AND OTHERS
FEELS RADICAL.

”



CAROLINE HENDERSON

2016-17 Shapiro Design Lab Resident
Pursuing a Master's of Social Work

SOS

I am interested in the relationship between design, institutions, and human subjectivity, and spaces where the role of design expands beyond art, beyond utility to include human control. Such design methods are employed in the development of hospitals, factories, schools, housing, and entire cities. Yet the prison, a removed and often forgotten construct, remains the space where design most realizes its capacity to shape and reshape subjects, affect behaviors, and define morality.

How does systematic and spacial design make, break, or transform human subjects from citizens to offenders to inmates? What happens to the mind when a system named "justice" inherently and violently peels away freedom from the convicted body? Michel Foucault presents the notion of docile bodies formed through actions of discipline, but what about the formation of docile minds?

To probe these questions, this project explores three design themes related to human control: Sanitation, Observation, and Security. The title of this project, SOS, is an initialism for these themes, but is also a nod to the Morse code distress signal, SOS, evoking the anguish, desperation, and urgency so often experienced by the incarcerated. SOS is a multifaceted project that included the formulation of in- and out-of-prison focus groups, the use of poetic inquiry as a form of qualitative research, the creation of a video autoethnography exploring personal experiences working in prisons, and the design of an SOS syllabus that acts as a digital companion and guide to the greater project.

COLLABORATIONS

PRETTY BROWN GIRL CLUB & SIT ON IT DETROIT AT THE HEIDELBERG PROJECT

Collaborators: Alexis Stanton, Dr. Rebecca Chung & RJ Miles

This year, the U-M Pretty Brown Girl Club (PBG), Sit On It Detroit, Source Booksellers, and the Design Lab made a contribution to The Heidelberg Project: the PBG Empowerment Book Bench. This bench will be placed in the children's playground that is a permanent part of the Heidelberg Project site for all to enjoy, in the spirit of the Heidelberg's mission to foster community arts-based education.

In line with the PBG mission "Empower a girl, empower the world," the book bench highlights women of color empowerment and is rooted in cultivating connection, self-love, and #Blackgirlmagic. Alongside the construction of the bench, PBG partnered with Source Booksellers, an independent bookstore in Detroit's Midtown district, to secure books that center the unique experiences of girls and women of color – which now live in the bench's built-in library. This PBG Empowerment Book



Bench was built by the Shapiro Design Lab and Sit On It Detroit (their work includes creating benches, with built-in libraries from reclaimed wood, in order to provide seating at bus stops around the city). Once built, the bench was thematized, crafted, and painted by the U-M Pretty Brown Girl Club.

The U-M Pretty Brown Girl Club serves as an on-campus network as well as mentorship organization for young girls/women of color ages 4-15 promoting positive body image and self-esteem.



EXHIBITION

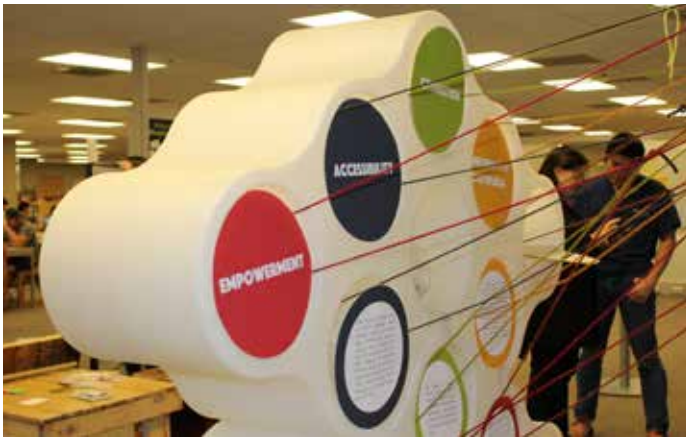
The Shapiro Design Lab Residency Exhibition, held in April of 2017, was a chance to showcase the work done by the inaugural Residency cohort. Beyond informal discussions with guests during Co-Learning and Co-Working times, or posts on the Design Lab's blog, it was a chance for the Residents to show their friends, colleagues, advisors, and anyone else they invited the varied activities they worked on during the year. Each Resident had a few minutes to talk about their project and then were able to talk more about their projects individually with attendees.

“

THE RESIDENCY IS AN IMPORTANT EXAMPLE IN HOW COLLABORATION CAN LOOK IN AN ACADEMIC SETTING. LIBRARIES HOLD A UNIQUE PLACE IN THE STRUCTURE OF A UNIVERSITY IN TERMS OF THEIR ABILITY TO FLEX, ADAPT, AND CONNECT.

”

-BRANDON PATTERSON





REFLECTIONS

"I'm thankful for this community that reminds me that there is always more to learn and create."

-Carolyn Gearig

"My acquisition of new skills, technical language, friends, and colleagues are things that I will carry with me long after the Residency and my time at the University of Michigan. The Design Lab afforded me space to create; intellectualize; collaborate, and make mistakes which as a doctoral student is mind-blowing."

-RJ Miles

"Throughout the residency, I continuously grappled with how to organize and display the information gathered in an engaging and authentic way, that was also respectful and inclusive of the people who spend everyday in prison, and who experience the type of discipline and control through design that my project explores in very tangible and violent ways."

-Caroline Henderson



REFLECTIONS

"If there is one great gift provided by programs like the Shapiro Design Lab Residency, it is creating access among different kinds of learning, not just curricular versus extracurricular learning."

-Dr. Rebecca Chung

"The Design Lab has been a radically revolutionary space that has continued to foster my personal, professional, and academic development. The lab operates within a digital justice framework, and thus, I have been able to further develop my knowledge of digital media, as well as expand upon my project with a community of supportive and engaged interdisciplinary scholars."

-Alexis Stanton

"Being involved in the Design Lab has added a special richness to my graduate experience, a richness that I know can be rare in a world where it's easier to view experiences as a means to an end rather than ends in and of themselves."

-Maggie Cease



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SIMONE SESSOLO

U-M PRETTY BROWN GIRLS CLUB

LAURIE ALEXANDER

COVER IMAGE BY RJ MILES

DESIGN BY CASSANDRA LEOPOLD

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE RESIDENTS' PROJECTS
AND THE OTHER WORK OF THE SHAPIRO DESIGN
LAB AT LIB.UMICH.EDU/DESIGN-LAB