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Active Collections, Passive Collecting: Revitalizing Library Displays to Diversify Collections & Increase Student Engagement

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Active Collections, Passive Collecting:

Revitalizing Library Displays to Diversify Collections & Increase Student Engagement

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Introduction to Us + the CWU Libraries

- Central Washington University
 - Regional comprehensive institution
 - Main campus in Ellensburg, WA with centers around the state
- CWU Libraries
 - Three library locations (Ellensburg; Des Moines; Lynnwood)
 - The ACWG is based at the main Ellensburg campus in the James E. Brooks Library

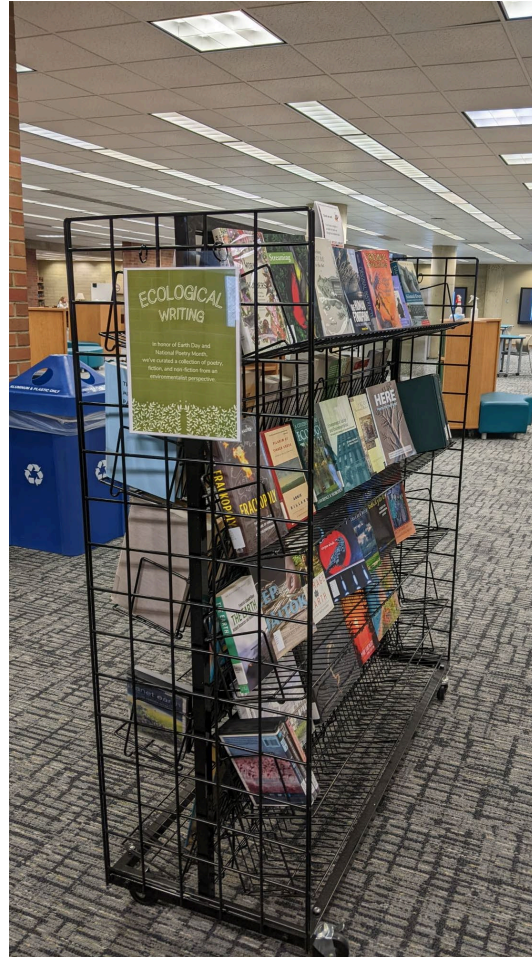


About Active Collections Working Group

- Launched in the Fall of 2021.
- Goal: **activate** the physical and digital collection by creating rotating displays of books throughout the library, pop-up libraries at events, and digital content that connects with our displays.
- Staff-faculty partnership including Access Services, Technical Services, Outreach/Events, and Faculty Librarians (UX Design, a Subject Librarian, FY & Transfer Experience librarian, and our ACRL diversity resident librarian).
- Displays orbit campus-wide or national themes and/or library events and activities.
- Active “Collections” = broader scope: includes DVDs, music, and digital collections.
- Management = engage group members’ interests and passions in creating the displays
 - Group members have ownership and autonomy over their display areas
 - Monthly check-ins on progress. Some displays are solo, some people work in partnership.



Overview of Activities



Second Floor
"Awkward Shelf"
display - rotates on a
monthly basis and is
in between two high
traffic areas

Overview of Activities



The **first-floor book display** theme often coincides with the adjacent large display case – is often used for cross campus collaboration



Overview of Activities

- ACWG has worked to contribute to and enhance campus held events through the use of our collections
 - Pop-up Library for an LGBTQ+ teach in event sponsored by CWU's Gender and Sexuality Center, the Women's Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program at CWU
 - Pop-Up Book Giveaway during an MLK Real Talk event held by the Diversity and Equity Center at CWU
 - Book display for an exhibition on activism held by CWU's Museum of Culture and Environment exhibition on activism



Overview of Activities

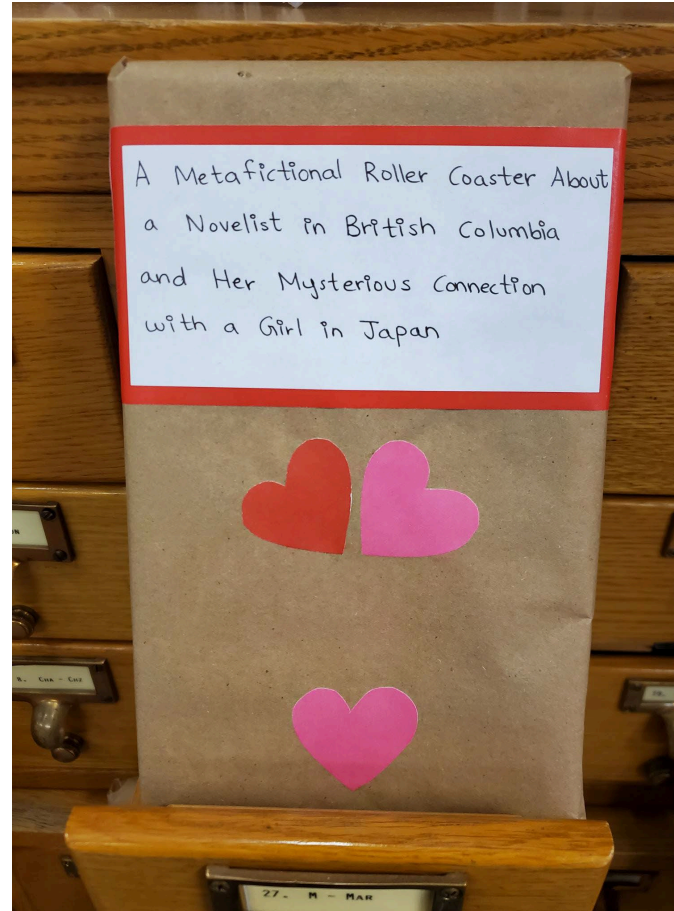


4th Floor CD display located outside of Music Commons area

2nd Floor Graphic Novels (Coming Soon!)



Overview of Activities



The Mystery Date with a Book display piqued curiosity about the collection

Overview of Activities

The **Popular Books** display (coming soon) will feature fresh and diverse recreational fiction, nonfiction, and poetry.



Active Collections in Action

- A "passive" method of collection assessment and development, especially in terms of increasing the diversity & equity of the collection
- A method of outreach & engagement
- An opportunity for staff/faculty/student partnership and collaboration
- To meet the unique needs of our regional comprehensive university which includes both recreational and academic users



A "passive" method of collection assessment and development for diversity & equity

- We mean "passive" in the sense that the collection development we are doing is a side-effect of our active collections ~ the collecting we do is very intentional and engaged.
- At CWU we use a user-driven collections policy, no approval plans, collecting by faculty librarians for A&H has been relatively minor in the past 10 years
- Significant reduction in monograph collecting with retirement of Collection Development librarian and pandemic



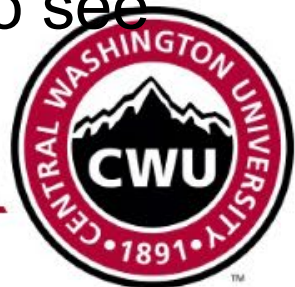
A "passive" method of collection assessment and development for diversity & equity

- Collection is lacking in diversity, and interdisciplinary identity-focused subject areas are particularly under-collected
- As subject librarian we have a duty to collect broadly, collect for curriculum, collect for our community
- ADI requirement also means increase in interdisciplinary/ethnic studies subject holdings



A "passive" method of collection assessment and development for diversity & equity

- We've done a lot of collecting around identity-focused history and heritage months which we created displays for
- Helped us identify meaningful gaps in the collection across numerous subject areas and gives us annual bite-sized chunks of the collection to collect around
- Opportunity to "get around" focus on user-driven acquisitions
- Whenever we do a display we look for an intersectional/diverse angle (example, Feel Good Reads) we made sure we had authors from systemically oppressed backgrounds and materials from non-dominant perspectives
- In addition to adding new titles, the act of pulling out and featuring these items that are identity-focused creates a palpable sense of welcoming and belonging for students from systemically oppressed groups – this is a *minimum* that is needed to create a welcoming environment for these students, for them to see themselves represented and celebrated in the library



Another side-effect: informal condition survey

- Especially banned books feature or other popular reading titles with heavy circulation in rough shape
- We know our shelves look tired/worn and we don't have a robust preservation plan, so this is an easy way to identify items for replacement or repair
- Has led to justifying a sample condition/replacement survey of high circulating items this summer



Another side-effect: informal condition survey



A method of outreach & engagement

- Black History Month display + Black Student Union + Diversity & Equity Center Collaborations
- Display contents included:
 - Academic texts, popular reading materials, DVDs, children's books (picture books, middle grade, and YA)
 - Interdisciplinary and intersectional
- Also facilitated a book giveaway: *All About Love* by bell hooks



Outreach: Black History Month



Outreach: Black History Month

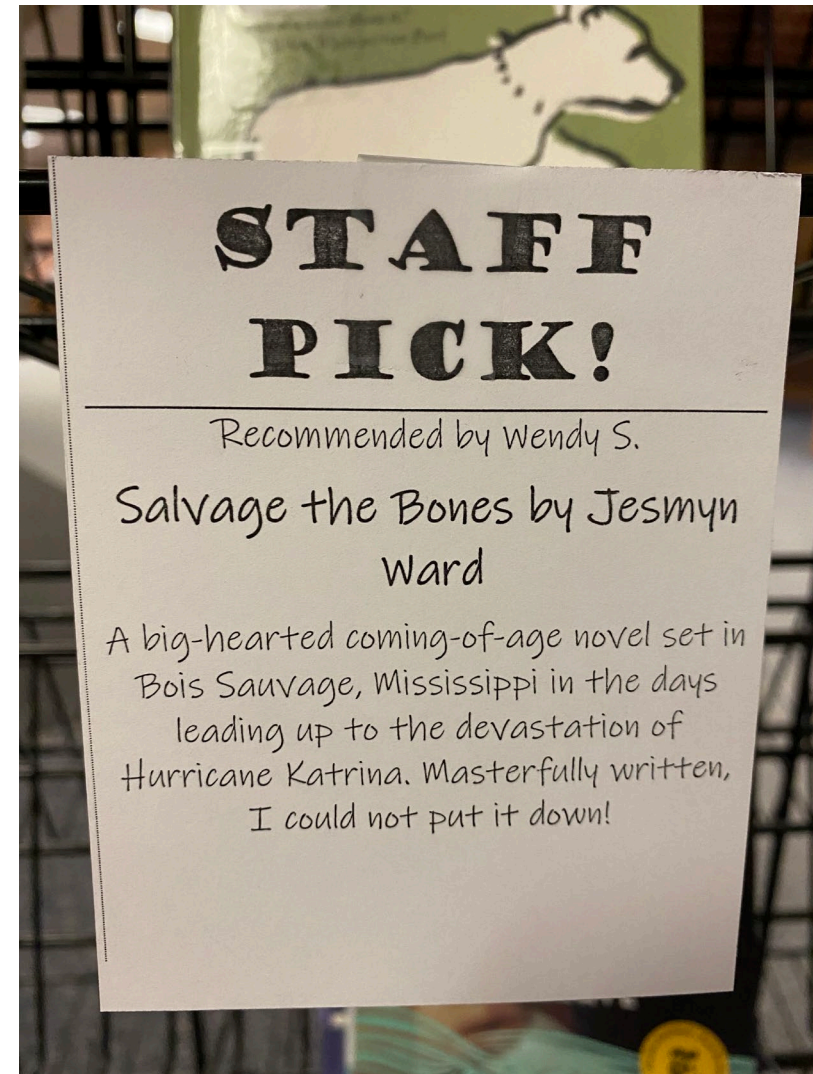


**Diversity & Equity
Center display
featuring student
contributions**



Staff Picks Display

- Recommended by student patron
- Idea brought to ACWG for discussion
- After approval, two ACWG staff spearheaded project, periodically checking in with group for feedback



Staff Picks Display

- Overcoming barriers to participation
 - List of popular fiction and nonfiction from collection
 - Microsoft Form
 - Announcement email to all-staff email list with deadline + reminders
- ~50% response rate among library faculty and staff
- Popularity of display inspired refresh for new quarter



Staff Picks Display

- **Engages** library staff, faculty, and student employees by seeking their participation
- **Fulfills** a need expressed by student patrons
 - Requests to browse fiction section or specific genres
 - Use of ILL services to request recreational reading material
- **Supplements** library programming in serving the needs of the "whole student"
 - Game nights, finals week de-stress events, mental health events
- **Highlights** parts of existing collection that get buried: popular fiction, nonfiction, poetry
- **Demystifies** library personnel



Bridging Public and Academic Library Services



Book displays allowed us to increase and update the amount of recreational reading materials available to our community

What we've learned & the future of Active Collections at CWU



Positive Takeaways

Themed displays, particularly those focused on DEI:

- Increase circulation
- Highlight books that students may not have encountered/sought on their own
- Add color, life, and energy to the building
- Provide an opportunity for cross-campus collaborations, including with student groups



Faculty-Staff Partnership in the ACWG

Advantages:

- Makes the most of complementary knowledge
 - Faculty and staff hold different pieces of the puzzle
- Enables streamlined workflows
 - Collaboration smooths out and speeds up the process
- Invites different perspectives and ideas
 - Faculty and staff interact differently with the library and its patrons



Faculty-Staff Partnership in the ACWG

Challenges:

- Scheduling and communication
 - Different work schedules and locations require virtual meetings and asynchronous communication
- Unclear roles and expectations
 - Some group members may be unsure of how they are expected or invited to participate



Lessons Learned

- Timing and Workflow
 - Materials that are checked out from periodical, monthly, and quarterly displays are returned to their regular locations
 - New materials for displays must be selected and ordered at least 2 months in advance
- Less is More Approach
 - We can still highlight a great deal of our collection without having to rotate every display on a constant basis



The Future of Active Collections

- Develop ownership of individual members around specific displays like the art room and other not-yet-determined/discovered locations
- More collaborations w outside groups / campus partners
 - Adding a GA or student worker to the working group
- Collections in the sense of eBooks / tie-ins with LibGuide
 - Playlisting, QR codes, features on subject guides etc
- Standing lists to streamline process – adding new items each rotation



Thank you!

Contact info:

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