

# The Feature Effect: Library Technicians embracing Collections Promotion

By Michelle Ward.

At Okanagan College, library technicians are encouraged to derive displays in our campus libraries as a longstanding strategy to promote services, facilities and collections. New item arrivals are a standard display at each library. In addition, at the start of every term to ensure a continuous turnover of feature displays, each library develops a “loose” schedule of themes based on cultural holidays and important events. Priority is given to campus events such as student orientations, and link-ups with student-driven events; e.g. Student Union celebration of International Women’s Day which in Kelowna is collaboratively sited out front of the library. Library visits with display tie-ins to entice non-traditional students into the library are encouraged; e.g. carpentry & woodworking for the Trades. Library staff react to impromptu opportunities to build features around controversial issues; e.g. in Penticton, Idle No More. Most importantly, public services staff are ideally placed to see topic demands and to raise ideas for features that promote collections relevant to coursework.

Increasingly these features are more proactive and ambitious. The context being the impetus of new programming at campuses, the building of supporting collections, changing circulation patterns, the transformation of collections from print to digital and more integrated contact between the Library and student learning; e.g. librarian-led research skills sessions. Supervising campus librarians, subject liaison librarians and faculty are now bringing ideas to the staff for displays to promote collections at the level of courses and timed to coincide with assignments and instruction.

Smaller campus libraries conduct displays both in and beyond the library. Penticton staff defy cramped space in the Library with innovative bulletin board features. Permanent lockable display units have been devoted to library features in the main office foyer in Salmon Arm and at campus building entrances in Penticton where, for example, resources for new programming in sustainable construction technology have been highlighted.

Vernon staff even took their efforts beyond the campus for an Okanagan College information event

at a local hockey arena. With help from colleagues at several campus libraries, staff scanned book covers and title pages of article publications by OC faculty that were converted to posters promoting both collections and faculty expertise.



Vernon Library Technician Karen Friesen proudly promoting the poster display of OC authors' works.



Close up of Okanagan College Authors' Display.

The Kelowna library benefits from a large foyer space through which users must enter the library to reach service points. Mobile display units can be pushed between the foyer and the student “hot-spot” of the Information Commons.

In conjunction with Remembrance Day in November 2013, a multi-department collaboration called

*Canadians at War & as Peacekeepers* promoted books, e-books and media from across our collections in support of Canadian history courses and featured unique military maps loaned from the private collection of an Okanagan College Geography professor, as well as military personnel gear loaned by a History professor and the family of a library staffer. Media publicity has brought the attention of the community to the library collection and faculty expertise.



Geography Professor Terence Day & History Professor Howard Hisdal discuss the finer points of their collaboration with the Kelowna library.



Military map featured in the Kelowna library.

Features are expanding across time and campuses. A Kelowna display featuring new titles for GEOG201 Food & Society and its specific book review assignment took on an extended life as professors in

Women Studies and University Writing adopted the theme in their assignments. The display became a travelling-show as the theme was picked up at two other campuses. In Fall 2013 the course was run at a second campus with the two professors involved requesting the feature. Library staff collaborated on a shared simultaneous feature at both libraries. The diversity of our collections is now more visibly promoted across our campuses.

A Library technician from Salmon Arm expresses a commitment shared with her colleagues: "Displays of items are fun to do and involve research, creativity and relevancy."

Supervising librarians comment that these features are a definite strategy for job enrichment for our library technicians and clerks. Supervisors and subject librarians provide general guidance on focus and content, and help with curatorial aspects such as faculty co-ordination and publicity, but the rest is laid open for the staff to derive. Skill sets developed by staff include:

- research skills in the selection of relevant and diverse sources with the scope to express their intellectual input;
- creativity with the design of posters, signage, layout and the sourcing of props;
- technological skills with scanning,
- creation of Prezi media shows to use on a digital monitor within the display zone;
- administrative tasks such as spread-sheeting lists for archival purposes on the shared Library network,
- and tracking the circulation of display items using their ILS circulation module skills.

Enhanced teamwork and collaboration are valuable results as staff will pool their individual skills and value each other's areas of strength to create the best feature they can.

The power of the features is in presenting libraries whose staff and services are vibrant, learner-focused and engaged with faculty, and the scope and diversity of our Library collections are out-there!

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