Designed for diversity: A collaborative campaign for equity in the Monash University Library collection

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Abstract:

Collection development at Monash University Library aims to fulfil the research and curriculum needs of university staff and students. To support the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture (MADA), collection development operates as a collaboration between academic faculty and the Subject Librarian. In order to further develop this collaboration and to encourage the selection and use of design resources by authors from diverse backgrounds, design lecturers and library staff have initiated a new project for 2018. The aim of the project is to investigate the diversity of the collection in its current state and to improve its ability to extend and reflect the multicultural nature of the university community. The project includes a campaign to promote books from the design world authored by underrepresented groups, including Indigenous Australians, people of colour, and female authors. This project is unique in its utilisation of the expertise of the design faculty who have extensive knowledge of authors, small publishers and less widely distributed publications not currently collected by the library. To close the project, an event will showcase new acquisitions in the redesigned Caulfield Library and will be replicated as a permanent resource in the online space. Items will be displayed alongside descriptions and recommendations from library staff and design academics to encourage their use in and outside of university classrooms. It is hoped that this project will encourage the co-design of collections in academic libraries and will highlight the importance of user-input in library collection development.

Introduction

In 2017, after the completed renovation of the Caulfield Campus Library at Monash University, it became apparent that the development of the Art, Design and Architecture Collection required a more critical approach. That realisation was prompted by the appearance of the book: 50 Artists You Should Know by Thomas Koster (2016). How had this book arrived in the library? Had the book been ordered as part of a standing order? Was the book part of the Australiana approval plan, which aims to assist librarians in the collection of locally published works? Was the book an item automatically recommended via a subject-specific profile provided by Gobi, the EBSCO-branded acquisitions tool? These questions arose because the book listed 50 artists you should know... and 49 of them were male.

The Monash University Caulfield Library caters to students in the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture through programs and collections designed to inspire design creativity and support research needs. The collection includes resources that represent Australian art and design theory and practice, including fine press publications, artists' books and zines. In early 2018, the Caulfield Library redeveloped their mission statement to better articulate the focus of the library. The Caulfield Library aims to:

- Be a welcoming focal point for the diverse campus community
- Provide a supportive, equitable, and tailored user experience
- Develop and provide quality resources and engaging programs that strive to meet the needs and expectations of library users.

At the same time, the Monash University Librarian and Learning Skills Adviser for Social Inclusion (employed as part of the Australian Government's Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program) were working on the development of an *Inclusive Teaching Toolkit* (Kendal, Prater, Phillips & Babai, 2018). The toolkit was developed in order to guide library staff towards more inclusive teaching practices and was then released to staff at the university more broadly. This toolkit offers six principles, guiding teachers in the library to be aware and informed, reflect on their teaching practices, be flexible and responsive, be proactive and intentional, display empathy and understanding and to use inclusive language

and resources. What might inclusive resources look like? It did not seem as if *50 Artists You Should Know* by Thomas Koster (2016) would meet this recommendation.

In the same year, Assistant Lecturer Kate McEntee was employed by Monash University's Department of Art, Design and Architecture. McEntee's research investigates equity and diversity in design practice and designers working in emerging learning contexts. She approached the library to engage in a collaborative project to analyse and diversify the Caulfield Library Design Collection. This project is titled: *The Equity Collection*. The aims of the project are to interrogate the diversity of the current Design Collection, to improve the ability of the collection to extend and reflect the multicultural nature of the university community, and to promote books authored by underrepresented groups including Indigenous people, people of colour, female and non-binary authors. A new collection would come together to showcase authorial diversity and inclusivity, aligned with Caulfield Library Charter and the Inclusive Teaching guidelines. The collection would be complemented by promotional events and an online tool designed to encourage design lecturers and researchers to broaden the range of resources they use in classrooms and in practice. As of September 2018, the Equity Collection project is underway with completion expected in 2019.

Definitions

Inclusion. Diversity. Equity. What do we mean by these terms and how are they used in librarianship in particular? The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) uses the word "inclusive" in documents such as the *Statement on Public Library Services* (ALIA, 2018) and "diversity" in the *Core Values Statement* (ALIA, 2007). The *Core Values Statement* requests that library and information services professionals commit themselves to values including "respect for the diversity and individuality of all people" (ALIA, 2007). Similarly, the American Library Association (ALA) lists "equity, diversity, and inclusion" as "fundamental values of the association and its members" (ALA, 2018). In the context of academic librarianship, Semenza, Koury and Shropshire (2017) neatly clarify and define the difference between diversity and inclusion in their exploration of "Diversity at work in academic libraries 2010-2015". They write:

"Diversity" is a descriptive term that is widely used in the literature surveyed and throughout higher education to describe conditions that reflect heterogeneity in any number of ways. The term, "inclusion", assumes a similar meaning yet suggests a more active sense of the same concept, bestowing on it a positive value - an all-of-ustogether philosophy. Innovation, advocacy and concrete implementation of ideas are all part of what is occurring in libraries throughout the world in support of diversity; thus, it is incredibly important to continue planning, implementing and assessing academic libraries diversity efforts.

(Semenza, Koury & Shropshire, 2017, p. 95)

It is possible to analyse the diversity of the Monash University Library Design Collection and it is possible to actively make the collection more inclusive. However, in reviewing the literature of librarianship, it appears that authorial diversity and inclusivity of a particular collection is not often at the heart of research on diversity in libraries. Articles have drawn attention to the importance of recruitment and retention of staff from a variety of backgrounds (Gulati, 2016) and to outreach and access for diverse communities (LaFond, Van Ullen & Irving, 2000; Edwards, Loyal, Stark & Zoellner, 2010). A notable exception is the work of Ciszek and Young (2010) who used approaches including investigation of circulation and use statistics, WorldCat Collection Analysis, comparison to standard bibliographies, focus groups, patron interviews and surveys to assess the collection of a large university library. Instead, the Equity Collection project looks at the authorial diversity and inclusivity of a specific sub-set of the collection at a specific time: The Design Collection at Monash University Library Caulfield Campus in 2018.

Background of the Monash University Caulfield Library Design Collection

The Design Collection is just part of the Art, Design and Architecture collection at Monash University Library, Caulfield Campus. The campus hosts 18,785 students, approximately 2000 of whom are enrolled in the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture (Monash University, 2016). Other faculties located on site include Business and Economics, Arts, Information Technology and Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences. The Caulfield Library was built in 1972 as part of Chisholm Institute, which then became Caulfield Institute of Technology. Art studies and practice have featured prominently on the campus ever since, and the collection has

grown to support the interests of artists and designers over the past forty years. Since renovations were completed in late 2017, the library now provides 4,440 square metres of space and seating for 750 people. The Caulfield Campus is multicultural and gender diverse. Its spaces are new, clean and welcoming. But does the collection welcome and include in the same way?

Analysis of collection and limitations

The Equity Collection project proposed that the current Design Collection be interrogated to see whether design and design practice texts in the library currently included:

- Authors who identify as indigenous or first peoples
- Authors who identify as women or non-binary
- Authors who identify as being a person of colour
- Authors who come from countries considered the 'global south' or 'peripheral countries'
- Work published in countries considered the 'global south' or 'peripheral countries'
- Work disseminated by smaller scale publishers who may not consider institutional libraries as an audience
- Abstract forms of publishing that are not necessarily recognised by institutionalised knowledge centres

How might we begin to analyse a truly massive collection comprising physical books, eBooks, artists' books, ephemera, DVDs, online tutorials and audio-visual material? The library team determined that the current Design Collection contains four main sub-groups reflective of the different design majors currently taught at the university: Industrial design, communication design, interaction design and urban planning and design. Some resources may belong to more than one of these groups. Marcus Chester, Librarian aligned to Art, Design and Architecture, took the lead in creating and documenting the queries run in the library management system ALMA (Ex Libris). Dewey Decimal Classifications were used to determine the topic of a particular item (for more details on these queries see Appendix A). However, limitations were needed to in order to retrieve a reasonable dataset. Queries were limited to the library at Caulfield campus, where the majority of design books are located. However, it

must be noted that Caulfield is only one of eight campuses, including Peninsula, Parkville, Clayton, Malaysia and South Africa, each with their own libraries, and each (possibly) holding various items related to design. The search was also limited to include only physical items, thereby excluding the extensive online collection. This decision was purposeful, in order to be able to promote and compare alternate books during stage three of the Equity Collection project.

Searches retrieved the following results: From a total 193,311 physical books in the Caulfield library, 52,035 are considered to belong to the Art, Design and Architecture collection. Within this collection, 7460 are part of the current Design Collection. Within this collection, books can be divided into four sub-groups:

• Industrial design: 1,387 physical books

• Communication design: 2554 physical books

• Interaction design: 754 physical books

Urban planning and design: 2765 physical books.

It was determined that 1730 books appear in more than one of these design sub-disciplines.

The subsequent step was to look at the records of these 7460 physical books to determine the identity of the author (or editor, if applicable) and to then investigate the background and location of the author, as well as the publisher of the item and the location of that publisher. This was a significant task. A research assistant was required to assist with the analysis, which in turn led to an application for a grant from the Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools (ACUADS) to pay for such assistance. Unfortunately, the application was not successful, and at this time the project team is unable to reveal the diversity of this collection of 7460 items.

Sourcing diverse titles

The second stage of this project was to crowdsource items from Design Faculty staff and international design experts. This occurred in two rounds over the space of five months. The first request for titles explained via email that the Equity Collection project:

"...is seeking to discover resources, not necessarily but possibly published in smaller circulation or outside of the mainstream publishing industry, which you have found helpful in your work/practice. We are reaching out to people we know in the design field to source as wide and diverse resources as possible. Do you have a few thinkers, publishers or writers you could contribute to this collection? This might be a text you love from your personal explorations that informs your design practice, a blogger you follow who writes insightfully but perhaps not 'academically' or a text used regularly to teach design outside of Western design schools. You might be familiar with a small local publisher that prominently features work by women or people of colour we could contact to discuss this project. Any and all resources you could send our way would be greatly appreciated."

(K. McEntee, personal communication, May 28, 2018).

The second email was more far more successful at generating responses. The second email asked for "The top 3 texts that have had the most impact on your work and/or changed the way you think about the world. They do not need to be specifically about design, or academic" (K. McEntee, personal communication, August 23, 2018). One respondent wrote, "what if mine [recommendations] are all written by white Westerners?" (H. Korsmeyer, personal communication, August 23, 2018). This is an excellent question, highlighting the need for a project such as the Equity Collection to explore, collect and share more diverse resources. The list of recommended titles will be made accessible during stage 3 of The Equity Collection project through an online resource and an exhibition.

Connecting resources and communities

Throughout the process of crowd-sourcing diverse titles, it has become clear that librarians continue to be in an excellent position to put the right book into the right hands. Resources that have been requested by one staff member can be placed on hold for a second staff member with similar interests, leading to expanded conversations between individuals. Collection development continues to provide a starting point in the relationship between librarians and faculty staff. *The book is the hook* that begins conversations about the needs of students, which in turn leads to research and learning skills education and training becoming

embedded in the curriculum. The development of research and learning skills then leads to library users uncovering diverse resources provided by the library.

However, in the Equity Collection project, resources and communities will also be connected on a broader scale. To close the project, an event will showcase new acquisitions in the Caulfield Library and will be replicated as a resource in the online space. Items will be displayed alongside descriptions and recommendations from library staff and design academics to encourage their use in and outside of university classrooms. These items will be set up in opposition to items that have been collected from the current collection, accompanied by a complete set of findings from the collection analysis.

Concurrent movements towards diversity at Monash University Library

During the time in which the Equity Collection project was launched, other groups within the Caulfield Library were also moving towards more inclusive practices. In February 2018, Diversity and Inclusion training was provided for all staff at the Caulfield Library, again under the leadership of Librarian Marcus Chester. In this workshop, staff members were encouraged to learn about the use of personal pronouns and to become more familiar with aspects of gender diversity in order to make the library a more inclusive space. Then, on International Women's Day (March 8, 2018) the Library hosted its first Wikipedia editing workshop to increase the visibility of women in Wikipedia articles on architecture and design topics. Under the banner of WikiD, Bennett, Clark, Edwards and the Parlour organisation (2018) have made guides available for this work to continue into the future. Both these projects have contributed to a growing climate of library staff embracing diversity and learning more about the ways in which libraries (including their staff and resources) can include and exclude.

Conclusions

A significant knowledge gap exists in regard to the authorial diversity and inclusivity of knowledge resources in design. Anecdotally, it is recognised across the Art, Design and Architecture faculty at Monash University that resources are dominated by work produced in a Eurocentric frame, often by white males. As noted by other design scholars:

"When we note the names who fundamentally shaped the thinking in design, it starts to indicate circular patterns of theory proposed by a handful of people largely concentrated in Europe and US whose ideas are continually cited to perpetuate its authority and privilege. This reflects the broader phenomenon of the visibility of men and the invisibility of women and ethnicities in design, both in industry and academic texts."

(Akama & Yee, 2016)

The predominance and use of these resources allow for a perpetuation of colonialism and prejudice that privileges the work and knowledge of dominant groups of people and frames of knowledge, while implicitly devaluing the work and knowledge of underrepresented peoples. There is a need to understand how we are unknowingly perpetuating systemic prejudices in our education system. There is a growing conversation in design academia around the need to decolonise design practice and education. In 2016 a group of emerging design researchers published a prominent essay to the design community as:

"Young design researchers...[who]...all have ties to countries considered as belonging to the Global South, while many of us live and study in North Atlantic nations. We live and work on the border, shuttling back and forth between the knowledge of our lands, deemed peripheral, and the logic of Western, Anglophonic and neoliberal academia, regarded as central. The struggle against the colonisation of knowledge, i.e. the colonial conditions that inform knowledge production and validation, is not only part of our work, but part of our lives."

(Abdulla et al. 2016)

By conducting this research, we aim to make explicit and visualise this anecdotal information in a useful and engaging manner. The broader goal of the work is not to merely draw attention to a presumed problem within our literature and sources, but to also build a resource to address that problem. The Equity Collection seeks to create a more inclusive and accessible database for researchers and educators alike. We aim to take a critical approach to the design of the collection and carefully consider the accessibility, interaction and modes of dissemination. It is essential that we develop a critical categorisation of work, for example

going beyond using a gender binary to identify authors. The collection itself should emphasise and reflect the values of inclusivity, diverse knowledge production and non-traditional forms of dissemination. This project directly supports improving tertiary education and research resources for the design faculty at Monash University, with aims to expand the work's availability to design faculties across Australia and internationally.

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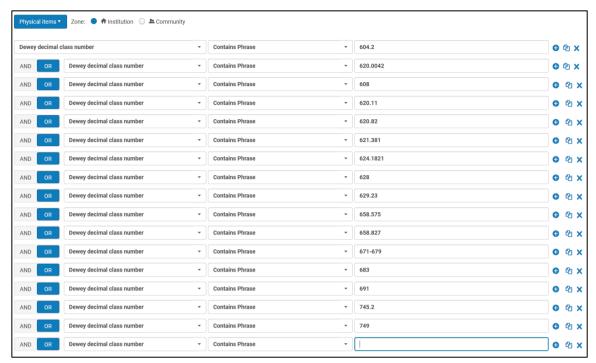
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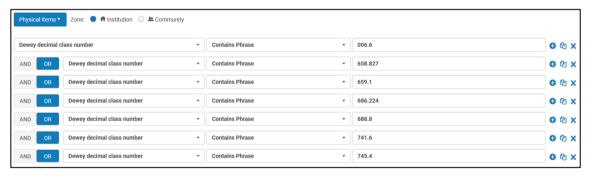
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Appendix A: Dewey Decimal Classifications used in querying library holdings

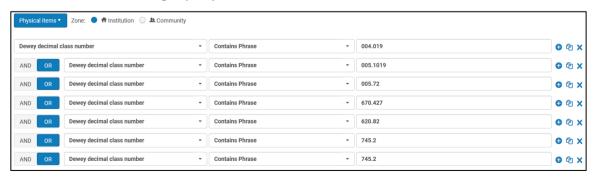
1. Industrial Design query



2. Communication Design query



3. Interaction Design query



4. Urban Planning and Design query

