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Anatomy of an Exhibit: The Academic Library as Place of Self-Instruction

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Anatomy of an Exhibit: The Academic Library as Place of Self-Instruction

Matthew Chase, MASP, MLIS

BACKGROUND

The scholarly literature shows that library exhibits:

- Enhance academic library spaces as self-guided learning experiences for students
- Demonstrate as examples of scholarship, in-depth research, and scholarly communication
- Invite users to participate in and absorb instructional content through space

The project is guided by the following theoretical contexts:

1. Critical Theory & Critical Librarianship
 - Interrogate forces of information production and access
 - Institutionalize critical and transformative spaces
2. Falk and Dierking's Contextual Model of Learning
 - Engagement in sociocultural, physical, and personal contexts
3. Foucauldian theoretical framework on knowledge and discourse
 - How knowledge and truth are constructed by the ways they are thought, spoken of, and practiced

PURPOSE

This exhibition project explores the question: How can academic library spaces be creatively transformed to support and engage students in critical information literacy?

CASE DESCRIPTION

The exhibit series is installed inside the San Marcos Campus Library at the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences.

The Librarian curates relevant and interesting materials for display in the Library, on topics relating to critical information literacy and health sciences education.

Qualitative data is collected via a comment section added to the exhibit. Two questions are posed to visitors to encourage comments:

- Did you learn something new or interesting from the exhibit?
- What are your thoughts?

FALL 2019 LIBRARY EXHIBIT



UNIVERSITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE
FOR HEALTH SCIENCES LIBRARY

THEATRE OF THE BODY: A RENAISSANCE OF HUMAN ANATOMY

Fall 2019 Exhibit



10 poster-size depictions of anatomical illustration created in Renaissance Europe.

Information and readings provided about the history of anatomy as an academic discipline.

Exhibit demonstrated the following themes:

1. Challenging traditional medical discourses
2. Production and dissemination of anatomical information
3. Ethical treatment of dissected bodies
4. Contributions of anatomists from the Middle East and Asia
5. Technological evolution of illustration



DISCUSSION

Visitors have reflected positively on the Fall 2019 exhibit. Visitors have found that the exhibit to be engaging, visually and aesthetically interesting, and prompting discourse on the academic field of human anatomy.

Preliminary qualitative statements, thoughts, and comments about the exhibit include:

- I discussed this topic with my classmates. It was really interesting.
- The images are engaging.
- It's crazy to think where we came from and where we are now.
- I found it engaging and thought provoking.
- Beautiful!

CONCLUSIONS

Based on preliminary qualitative data, visitors have an overall positive self-guided learning experience with the exhibit.

The exhibit series project not only expands the teaching and learning services of the library in regards to critical information literacy, but also enhances the aesthetics of the academic library spaces.

Further analysis should be directed to collecting data on what visitors learn from the exhibits as new and/or useful.

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