

Saint Louis University Libraries

Pius XII Memorial and Medical Center Libraries' Contributions to Community Outreach and Engagement

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Report

Conducted by the Pius/Medical Center Libraries Assessment Committee:

Patricia Gregory (chair), Assistant Dean for Library Assessment, Pius Library

Bram Boettge, Access Services Coordinator, Medical Center Library

Ronald Crown, Research and Instruction Librarian, Pius Library

Jonathan Harms, Library Associate, Research & Instructional Services, Pius Library

Haroon Iqbal, Technology Coordinator, Pius Library

Miriam Joseph, Research and Instruction Librarian, Pius Library

Erica Lauriello, Library Associate, Sr., Special Collections, Pius Library

Donghua Tao, Medical Reference Librarian, Medical Center Library

John Waide, Outreach Coordinator, Pius Library (ad hoc committee member)

Introduction

During the Fall 2015 semester, the Pius/Medical Center Libraries Assessment Committee conducted an in-house study of library contributions to community outreach and engagement. The University's Clocktower Accords, Strategic Plan, and Community Engagement Inventory (conducted in Summer 2015) all pointed to optimum timing for this survey and for planning future library-sponsored initiatives.

Definition of "Community Engagement"

The following definition from the [Carnegie Foundation's Classification for Community Engagement](#) was used in this study:

Community engagement describes collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.

The purpose of community engagement is the partnership of college and university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching, and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good.

Respondents were instructed not to report personal activities such as service to the profession, offices held, committee memberships, or volunteerism not under University auspices. Rather, they were urged to provide examples such as 1818 high school library services, Better World Books charitable donations to a local school, or specific library-sponsored events open to the public.

Method

The Assessment Committee sent an e-mail survey to seventy-seven Pius and Medical Center library faculty and staff, who were asked to answer two questions:

1. Since January 1, 2012, what activities has your department participated in that could be construed as community engagement?
2. What outreach activities could your department or library initiate that we are not doing?

The survey was open from October 19-31, 2015. Of the 77 recipients of the survey, 71 started it, and 38 respondents (54%) completed one or both questions.

Findings

Some activities fit more than one component of the Carnegie definition. The following section identifies for each activity the definition component thought to be most salient.

Community Outreach and Engagement Activities of the Libraries Since January 2012

Enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity

- Sponsored exhibitions, lectures, and outside speakers, such as:
 - The St. Louis Literary Award and related activities
 - A joint SLU-Washington University, Humanities/Med Schools international conference: Vesalius and the Invention of the Modern Body
 - Participation in the creation of the Beyond the Numbers Conference for librarians, educators, and information professionals working specifically with data, government, and economic information
 - The annual Jesuit Research Symposium and exhibition

- Provided access to collections (including archives and rare books) and reference assistance to the community at large.
- Participated in open access initiatives for collaborative digital collections, such as:
 - Digital Public Libraries of America (DPLA)
 - Digital Scriptorium
 - Catholic Research Resources Alliance (CRRA)

Enhance curriculum, teaching, and learning

- Provided instruction and information literacy classes to area high school students:
 - 1818 information literacy classes
 - Instructional sessions to non-1818 visiting high school students
 - Class on library resources to St. Louis-area high school students as part of the SLU Summer Scholars program administered by the Office of Multicultural Affairs in the School of Medicine
- Provided an educational symposium for hospital nurses to learn more about evidence-based practice and research in partnership with the SLU School of Nursing and SLU Hospital

Prepare educated, engaged citizens

- Sponsored Community Read, in conjunction with the 2015 St. Louis Literary Award, both of which were open to the general public
- Presented to groups outside the University on a variety of historical topics related to the University

Contribute to the public good

- Grand Center activities, such as:
 - Sponsored meet and greet events in Pius Library
 - Organized and led walking tours of the Grand Center district/Midtown neighborhood
- Participated in the Better World Books program of charitable distributions
- Hosted exhibits and events that are open to the public, such as:
 - Special Collections public programs on manuscripts and rare books in the form of exhibitions, lectures, conferences, and invited speakers that deal with cultural heritage, information literacy, and the Jesuit mission, including
 - The annual Saint Louis Conference on Manuscript Studies
 - The annual Lowrie Daly, S.J. Lecture
 - “Forging the Moon; or, How to Spot a Fake Galileo,” a guest lecture by Nick Wilding, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Early Modern History at Georgia State University (April 1, 2015)
 - [THE ART OF PROTEST](#) online and on-site exhibition (November 2–December 31, 2015)
 - Exhibit of Faculty-published Works (March 1–31, 2015)
 - Public lecture on the Saint Louis Exorcism of 1949 (October 29, 2013)
 - The World Knew – Jan Karski’s Mission for Humanity (September 24–October 31, 2015)
- Trained first responders and librarians across four main urban areas (St. Louis, Kansas City, Columbia, and Springfield) about using National Library of Medicine disaster information resources
- Provided computers and general library access for the public
- Provided access to historical and current government information to members of the community as a Federal Depository Library
- Broadened our community engagement through the Library Associates via the St. Louis Literary Award and related programming

Suggested Activities for Future Community Outreach and Engagement

Enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity

- Provide a sustained program of exhibitions, lectures, and outside speakers that would enrich the educational and cultural vitality of the local community, including
 - Host more campus/community-wide events such as film showings, or bringing in local/ national authors of fiction, and reading programs
 - Bring in more SLU authors and other university and local authors to promote their books
 - Sponsor student art gallery
 - Showcase faculty research (reception)
 - Strategically sponsor sessions or panels on interesting historical/academic topics, particularly aspects of SLU history
- Increase marketing of library services, events, and exhibits

Enhance curriculum, teaching, and learning

- Provide more outreach for SLU Hospital staff who are not University employees
- Bring library information resources available to SLU students out to potential students at local, regional, national, or even international high schools for sampling, in order to attract more students to SLU
- Sponsor internships for students in the community who are interested in libraries, research, archives, rare books, etc.

Prepare educated, engaged citizens

- Sponsor book clubs and/or Common Read programs
- Offer workshops and services to the public (e.g., digital literacy, information literacy)
- Partner with local public libraries to teach information literacy
- Find opportunities to reach out to local schools, shelters, etc. about information literacy and the role it can serve to enrich education, support job searches, support resources that allow citizens to fulfill civic responsibilities, etc.
- Offer instruction and outreach to the general public on how to find reliable and consumer-friendly information: medicine and healthcare, economics, demographics, education, housing, labor, and agriculture

Strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility

- Create and maintain a social justice calendar for the St. Louis region

Address critical societal issues

- Align library outreach efforts with the Clocktower Accords,¹ especially #4 and #5
- Host and provide space for events and exhibits on societal issues, such as healthcare needs in St. Louis

Contribute to the public good

- Explore potential partnerships with SLU and/or local community entities:
 - Partner with Big Brothers Big Sisters (e.g., selecting and purchasing books)
 - Collaborate with academic departments engaged in outreach in public policy, political science, public health nursing, etc.
 - Participate in Grand Center First Friday events
 - Collaborate with Casa de Salud to provide patient education materials from trusted sources; establish one or more social media accounts (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) that could provide such information
- Maintain a page on our website and a poster within the library that contains a list of healthcare volunteer opportunities in the area
- Sponsor "brown bag" sessions on a variety of topics of interest to the general public and to the SLU community

¹ Clocktower Accords: {#4} Additional college prep workshops for students in the area's most disadvantaged school districts. {#5} Establishment of a K-12 bridge program, including summer programs, in the Normandy and Shaw neighborhoods to help increase the numbers of college-bound students from neighborhoods in those areas.

Committee Recommendations

The committee acknowledges that while the implementation of some of the suggested activities might be accomplished with currently available resources, others may require additional fiscal investment and/or personnel. Based on the survey results and this report, the Assessment Committee makes the following recommendations:

- Explore ways to provide a sustained program of exhibitions, lectures, and outside speakers
 - One possibility is the collaboration with or expansion of the charge of the current Pius Spaces, Services, Exhibits, and Events Committee
- Increase marketing of library services, events, and exhibits to both the University and the larger communities.
- Hold library-wide discussions on how to develop and implement the above and future suggestions for community outreach and engagement, notably the above-mentioned alignment of library efforts with the Clocktower Accords
- Explore establishing a standing committee on Community Outreach and Engagement, the charge of which would be to develop, implement, and monitor library-wide community outreach and engagement efforts and serve as a clearinghouse for library faculty and staff suggestions