

Gi-Gikinomaage-Min: We Are All Teachers

Documenting the experiences of underrepresented communities and ensuring diverse archival collections can be challenging for libraries. A recently published article by Grand Valley State University faculty describes an interdepartmental collaboration to co-create and preserve a digital collection documenting an element of local Native American history. The process they used can serve as a model for other institutions.

Melanie Shell-Weiss, current Chair of the Liberal Studies Department and former Director of the Kutsche Office of Local History; Annie Benefiel, University Libraries Archivist for Collection Management; and Kimberly McKee, current Director of the Kutsche Office and Assistant Professor in the Liberal Studies Department, co-authored: “We are all teachers: A collaborative approach to digital collection development.” The article describes the collaboration between three entities—the Kutsche Office, University Libraries, and the Native American Advisory Board, which falls under the Office of Inclusion and Equity—to document the urban experience of Native Americans in Grand Rapids.

“The project reflects the importance of working intentionally to build collections that reflect the rich histories and diversity of the local community,” said McKee.

The project is entitled Gi-gikinomaage-min, translated from Anishinaabemowin as “We are all teachers.” Starting in 2014, the project will continue through 2019 at least. Currently, 430 materials have been digitized and are available in the University Archives digital collection. The project also includes

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the recordings and transcriptions of new oral histories.

One of the guiding principles of the project is to ensure Native American control over the newly created content. As an archivist, Benefiel serves as an advisor on best practices to support the future of the collection rather than shaping actual content. Because these materials are being created responsibly and in good-faith, Benefiel hopes they will be valuable to researchers into the future and, most importantly, give voice to the local Native American experience.

Shell-Weiss remarked on the strong institutional support that has made this project possible. “Grand Valley has viewed this project as an extension of our core mission, and this work is centrally important to us as a teaching institution.”

Shell-Weiss, M., Benefiel, A., & McKee, K. (2017). We are all teachers: A collaborative approach to digital collection development. *Collection Management*, 42(3-4), 317-337.

View the collection at:
<https://digitalcollections.library.gvsu.edu/collections/show/2>



Valeria Long: Always Learning

In her eighteen years at Grand Valley State University, Valeria Long has worked at the Van Andel Research Institute, the Steelcase Library, and the Frey Foundation Learning Center, where she is currently the liaison librarian to nursing, public health, and the diagnostic and treatment sciences.

Long likes being at the center of the action, so it makes sense that she works with the health sciences; these programs are growing rapidly and it is critical to educate students to make informed decisions.

“I tell students that someday soon, they’re going to be medical professionals and I might be their patient! So I have a personal investment to teach students what good information looks like and how to find it. It’s important and exciting work,” Long explained.

In 2016, Long was recognized by University Libraries colleagues with the Library Excellence Award, which is awarded to a faculty or staff member who goes above and beyond their job description. Her colleagues mentioned that she “is a strong advocate for students and a champion for the Libraries. She mentors colleagues, demonstrates leadership at all levels, and is a friend to all.” The following year, Long was recognized by health science librarians from across the state with the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Michigan Health Sciences Libraries Association.

Her favorite part of the job? “Working with students and witnessing those a-ha moments when they learn something new. Librarians are always learning, and that’s always been a draw for me. We’re geeks that way.”

Valeria retired in March of 2018. Happy trails, Val!