

Lori Bronars and Gwyneth Crowley

# Library outreach through media wall exhibits

## Interactions with the research community

The crowd hummed as it waited for the speaker at the new media wall exhibit with standing room only. The latest research about emotional intelligence was about to be discussed. Timed with the inauguration of the new university president, who was an innovator in this field, the well-attended event, “Emotional Intelligence: Yale’s Leadership,” held promise for the future of our outreach program.

This article describes the media wall exhibit program used to showcase and promote the work of Yale faculty, researchers, academic units, and university-sponsored community programs. With the mandate to combine two traditional, academic branch libraries and a statistical lab, designing a new hybrid service model was crucial. Planners reviewed data about students’ use of space, visited innovative library sites, and researched architectural features that could be included to create a vital, aesthetically pleasing collaborative space for the 21st century. Data showed that students

preferred group study spaces and an interactive community facility. A media wall is an avenue for interaction with this research community and a new model for exhibits.

The media wall consists of nine wall-mounted 20.5” high x 40” wide LCD panels located in the 24/7 study space at The Center for

Science and Social Science Information (The Center) at Yale University. Exhibit receptions and lectures are held here with featured members of Yale’s academic community. Two exhibits are presented every year.

The Center is a collaborative library and IT service, which opened in January 2012. It provides library research support services, public workstations, group study spaces, presentation practice



Figure 1. The Center’s media wall in the 24/7 study space. Photo credit: Monique Atherton.

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and video conference rooms, science and social science collections, statistical analysis support services, and a computer classroom. The Center's 24/7 study space includes two traditional study tables, soft seating, a collaborative media:scape workstation, and four computers. It is bordered by three group study rooms with media:scape technology. Figure 1 shows a broad view of the media wall in the 24/7 study space.

The exhibits' main goal is part of The Center's Program Plan, promoting Yale research within the institution and online in an effort to raise the profiles of the researchers and library alike, putting our collective efforts on public display in a

proactive position. An added benefit is that displaying current research and programs around the university has created opportunities for communication between faculty and librarians. The former are given the opportunity to publicize their work and the latter learn about recent research. This exchange of ideas helps in collection development and other collaborations. The faculty and researchers are thankful because their work is being highlighted and acknowledged prominently in a public space. As liaison librarians, our goal is to continue to inform academic discussions in order to better serve departments.

Library outreach to academic departments is an active part of position responsibilities for liaison librarians at The Center, which is located in close proximity to science and social science academic departments and professional schools. Our experience has been consistent with the literature. Melissa Dennis

writes, "With outreach responsibilities on the rise in academic libraries and budgets declining or remaining stagnant, finding outreach initiatives that support the university in creative ways are on the rise."<sup>1</sup>

The exhibit curators, who are also liaison librarians, brainstorm and review literature and news for interdisciplinary and emerging topics with appeal for an academic audience. Authors Sarah J. Chicone and Richard A. Kissel note, "A consideration of audience is important to

the development of any successful exhibition, as that consideration and classification of visitors informs and impacts the development and design of exhibitions."<sup>2</sup>



Figure 2. Girls' Science Investigations activity. The rockets are being wired up for launch by Sarah Demers and Rona Ramos. Photo credit: Kelley Fryer.

### Development and summary of exhibit ideas

In collaboration with the library director, the exhibit theme is developed. Exhibit ideas have also been inspired by conversations between librarians and faculty. In addition, featured researchers have proposed ideas for future exhibits. For instance, a Physics faculty member featured in the "Research at Yale: Shaping the Future" exhibit suggested focusing on Yale science outreach programs for elementary, and junior and senior high schools. The resulting exhibit, the third at The Center, was called "Yale Reaches Out to Future Scientists." The programs included were created to encourage exploration on scientific topics under the tutelage of Yale faculty, staff, students, and volunteers. Images from Yale Physics Olympics, Girls' Science Investigations (figure 2, Wiring up the Rockets), S.C.H.O.L.A.R. Program (where 100 local students live and

learn on campus for 3 consecutive summers), Pathways to Science, EVOLUTIONS (an after-school program for serious students to explore science with the Peabody Museum of Natural History), Science Saturdays, and Math Mornings showed activities of program participants along with the sometimes astounding scientific phenomena demonstrated at the events such as standing sound waves in a closed flame tube, smoke ring generation, and visualizing forces and surface tensions with massive bubbles.

The first media wall exhibit was titled “Women in Science and Engineering at Yale: The Evolution.” It is a good example of the diversity that the curators strive for as it featured more than 70 women from past to present from 21

departments. This was coincidentally well-timed with the Women’s Faculty Forum’s study on early women at Yale, and curators were able to assist them in their research. The exhibit represented a crossroads for science and social science in that it addressed the role of women in science fields at Yale.

The next exhibit was “Research at Yale: Shaping the Future.” This display featured portraits, research interest statements, and images from research for 44 faculty members representing 17 departments at Yale. Images ranged from an artistic rendering of the Dengue virus as it enters a host (on video) to a view of experimental plots in a constructed forest in Queens, New York, and Koshien Stadium in Japan and its baseball fans during the seventh-inning stretch.

The fourth media wall exhibit was entitled “Emotional Intelligence: Yale’s Leadership.”

The strategic methods from Yale’s Center for Emotional Intelligence (YCEI) were highlighted with photos of children from local grade schools participating in program activities. Through research done by the curators, the history of emotional intelligence was illustrated with a timeline showing significant Yale and non-Yale contributors to the development of this concept from Charles Darwin in 1872 through the appointment of YCEI Director Marc Brackett in 2013. Brackett was a featured

speaker at a well-attended opening reception. With experience, the library learned that attendance at a reception nearly doubled if a related speaker is presenting.

The fifth exhibit was titled “Streams of Sustainability at Yale.” To

prepare for this exhibit, the curators met with a wide-range of administrators and faculty members, including a chemistry faculty member, a facilities manager at Yale Health (an HMO), the managers of the Yale Farm and the Yale West Campus Urban Farm, the assistant director of the Yale Office of Sustainability, the director of Energy Management, an education and outreach coordinator from the Office of Sustainability, and the Waste Management and Recycling manager. Images used in the exhibit included the Yale Health Healing Garden, the Student Service Corps. conducting a waste audit on campus, Energy Explorer diagrams of energy use throughout campus buildings, the university president announcing the release of the new Sustainability Strategic Plan 2013-2016, the two Yale farms, and transportation options.

The current exhibit, “Marsh Botanical Garden: Yale’s Hidden Jewel,” went on display



Figure 3. Large-sized print poster publicizing an exhibit within The Center. Photo credit: Monique Atherton.

in late September 2014. For this exhibit the curators explored the history of the garden through the Yale Office of Public Affairs, the University Archives, and various publications, including a manuscript held by the library; researched university directors and some of their notable achievements; found information on the landscape architect Beatrix Farrand and other campus work she had done; and studied the garden's namesake and his life, grave site, and mansion (also deeded to Yale upon his death).

Expertise was tapped at the library's Manuscripts and Archives Department to track down a scan of the original Marsh will.

Photos were taken in every season for a year in collaboration with the garden's manager to ensure representation of the garden at its best all year long. Some faculty use the garden in their teaching, and images from classes using the garden are included. One of these faculty members invited the curators to her students' presentations at the garden at the end of the previous semester. Two former directors as well as the current director were contacted for input into the exhibit. The garden manager has agreed to be our speaker for the opening reception.

## Design work

Graphic design and presentation loading into the C-nario software for exhibits is done by the exhibit designer, a manager in the Yale Information Technology Services' Photo and Design unit. The exhibit is built in Photoshop. High-resolution images are collected from a variety of formats. The media wall exhibits emphasize images more than text. Video clips are also included where possible. Layers are used to build sequences with related screens. A specially created template replicates the size and placement of the nine LCD panels on the media wall, the placement of images and text in relation to edges on the panels, and facial images. JPEGs of the display are exported from Photoshop and then imported into a PowerPoint show, which is sent to the curators and others for review. Edits and changes are incorporated into the original Photoshop files.

Once the screens have been approved,

the designer exports each one, first removing the screen grid, as a PNG file. Next the PNG files and any related videos are imported to the display software, C-nario, in which the designer builds sequences of related screens and then orders the sequences the way they are to appear in the exhibit.<sup>3</sup>

The exhibit designer has found the experience of designing digital exhibits engaging and gratifying because of the wide array of design elements used, including typography, graphics, photography, and video. He also finds that working with librarians, who he considers experts in research, makes his job more productive and feels "there are no limitations on what we can produce together."<sup>4</sup>

Exhibits are publicized within the university by The Center's associate director for public services in collaboration with the library system's director of library communications. The channels used include the library's online calendar, homepage, news feed, social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter pages), email lists, LCD screens in various Yale libraries, and the campus Yale Calendar. For selected exhibits, the Yale Office of Public Affairs and Communications issues press releases. Print posters are created by the exhibit designer and distributed to academic departments by liaison librarians. Figure 3 illustrates a large-sized poster within the library that publicizes an exhibit. When exhibits are removed from the media wall, they live online in perpetuity on The Center's website.<sup>5</sup>

## Conclusion

The media wall exhibit space has been a tremendous success. Faculty members are pleased with the promotion of research. Professor Sidney Cahn, senior lecturer and research scientist/scholar in Physics remarked that the exhibit "visually engaged the viewers with the manifold outreach programs Yale has promoted in several academic departments. It reveals the broad participation of the community, dynamic events, and intense focus produced in the students."<sup>6</sup>

Recently, a faculty member in Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology asked if

his lab's current publications could be featured on the media wall. Another faculty member asked if her program could be included next time. The associate director for public services comments, "We've had visitors from around the world come to the Center who specifically comment on and ask questions about the digital exhibits. Not only are they impressed with the aesthetic, they acknowledge that it's a unique way to highlight research that is happening in the sciences and social sciences across campus."<sup>7</sup>

Librarians are collaborating more with faculty, staff, and researchers and are learning more about university activities. For the curators, there are greetings when we pass former collaborators on campus. To thank us, the Physics Department manager, presented the curators with Galileo bobble heads. Library administrators welcome the opportunity to further support Yale's academic and research activities.

## Notes

1. Melissa Dennis, "Outreach initiatives in academic libraries, 2009-2011," *Reference Services Review* 40(3):368-383.

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*("Research support for creative writers," cont. from page 604)*

Furthermore, providing increased support to creative writers can spur outreach to students in other fields that traditionally lie outside the realm of academic research. How can libraries expand the services they offer to student dancers? Painters? Experimental filmmakers? The possibilities are as intriguing as they are numerous. Who knows what artists can produce when they have the offerings of the library at their fingertips?

## Notes

1. AWP Directors Handbook 2012, as cited in Harriett Green, "Literature as a Network: Creative-Writing Scholarship in Literary Magazines," *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 14, no. 2 (2014).

2. David Pavelich, "Lighting Fires in Creative Minds: Teaching Creative Writing in Special Collections," *College & Research Libraries News* 71 no. 6 (2010): 295-297, 313.

2. Sarah J. Chicone and Richard A. Kissel, *Dinosaurs and Diorama: Creating Natural History Exhibitions* (Walnut Creek, California, Left Cost Press, Inc., 2014).

3. Mark Saba, email on June 16, 2014, to Lori Bronars.

4. Mark Saba, email on January 16, 2014, to Lori Bronars.

5. See <http://csssi.yale.edu>.

6. Sidney Cahn, email on July 10, 2014, to Lori Bronars.

7. Kelly Barrick, email to Lori Bronars and Gwyneth Crowley on July 30, 2014.

## Acknowledgements

Monique Atherton, graduate student and photographer, School of Art, Yale University; Kelly Barrick, associate director for public services at the Center for Science and Social Science Information, Yale University; Sarah Demers, associate professor, Physics, Yale University; Kelley Fryer; Jill Par-chuck, director of the Center for Science and Social Science Information, Yale University; Amanda Patrick, director of Library Development and Communication, Yale University; Rona Ramos, technical support specialist and lecturer, Physics, Yale University. *zz*

3. Hugh Burkhart, "Creative writing and the Web," *College & Research Libraries News* 73, no. 3 (2012): 156-159.

4. Julia Glassman, *Other life forms* (Dinah Press, 2012).

5. Julie Orringer, interviewed by Liz Sher, Politics and Prose Bookstore and Coffeehouse, [www.politics-prose.com/10-questions/julie-orringer](http://www.politics-prose.com/10-questions/julie-orringer) (accessed September 9, 2014).

6. Alison J. Head and Michael Eisenberg, "Truth be told: How college students evaluate and use information in the digital age," *Project Information Literacy*, 2010, [http://projectinfolit.org/images/pdfs/pil\\_fall2010\\_survey\\_fullreport1.pdf](http://projectinfolit.org/images/pdfs/pil_fall2010_survey_fullreport1.pdf).

7. Pavelich, "Lighting Fires in Creative Minds."

8. See, for example, Janine Henri's guide to images at [guides.library.ucla.edu/images](http://guides.library.ucla.edu/images). *zz*