

Beyond the Stacks

Ecofeminist Expressions Collaborative Book Collection

In spring 2023, Mimmo Bonanni (he/him) served as an embedded librarian in the “Gendering Peace and Security” Humanities Lab at Arizona State University (ASU). The ASU Humanities Lab¹ provide students with hands-on research opportunities to address compelling social challenges. Mimmo participated in the “Gendering Peace & Security Lab,” which examines how intersectional ecofeminist approaches can empower women and promote environmental justice, and achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this role, he closely collaborated with faculty members to develop the curriculum and support the class’s research needs, significantly enhancing instruction and student research support.² Over the course of the lab, a student project created a unique opportunity for Mimmo to reach out beyond his division to collaborate with Corie Cisco (she/her), the project coordinator for open stacks at the ASU Library, to create a unique book display inspired by their topic.

Instructional and Research Support

As the embedded librarian, Mimmo’s multifaceted contributions focused on both instruction and research support. He provided extensive research guidance, assisting students in locating and accessing academic resources pertinent to their individual and team projects. This included helping them navigate databases, find books, and access articles related to the social challenges addressed by the SDGs. He taught students how to effectively search databases, leverage keywords, and employ Boolean operators to refine search results.³

Mimmo conducted an instructional session focused on information literacy at the beginning of the semester to help students evaluate their research topics and identify appropriate databases and resources. He guided them on how to navigate databases to access full-text articles, request articles through interlibrary loan if necessary, and properly cite sources using database citation tools and style guides like the American Psychological Association (APA) and Modern Language Association (MLA). He also introduced citation management, recommending Zotero for its open-access availability and utility in organizing and sharing citations within their project teams.

Mimmo collaborated with professors Miki Caul Kittilson and Mohadeseh Mousazadeh Miandehi and instructional designer Arina Melkozernova on developing course resources and the required reading list. Working with Melkozernova, he ensured that all academic journal articles and necessary readings were accessible in the course management system shell on

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the Canvas platform. This included embedding links to PDFs and organizing resources to facilitate easy student access.⁴

Throughout the semester, Mimmo provided ongoing consultation and actively engaged in classroom discussions. During class sessions, he offered immediate research support, suggesting relevant databases, books, and other resources. He also created a specialized library guide, *Humanities Lab: Gendering Peace and Security*, for the course, which included links to required readings, SDGs resources, and curated lists of academic research databases. The guide featured keyword search strategies, project tools, and citation management recommendations to aid students in their research.⁵

Mimmo offered tailored research consultations for student teams based on their specific SDGs topics. For example, he recommended databases such as JSTOR, HeinOnline, and UN resources relevant to peace studies for student teams working on SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). Throughout the course, his targeted support ensured that each team could effectively address their SDG-related research questions and develop comprehensive project outcomes.

Highlighted Project: Ecofeminist Book Collection

One of the standout projects from the class was a presentation by students Jessica Hladik and Chimereze Okezie. They developed a book list focusing on the intersectionalities among gender equality, women's rights, and environmental challenges, aligning it with the SDGs. They planned to organize an online recommended reading list on ecofeminism, including 10 “eco-feminist” books, such as *Solar Storms* by Linda Hogan. Their primary goal was to introduce ASU faculty, students, and researchers to the concept of ecofeminism by creating a valuable educational resource encapsulating the essence of ecofeminism through curated book selections.⁶

Initially, Jessica and Chimereze wanted to work with local public libraries in Tempe and Phoenix, but they ultimately chose to collaborate with the ASU Library because its academic focus meant that the book titles most relevant to their project were available in the ASU collection. These included both academic works and fiction addressing sustainability, which are accessible to the community of ASU researchers and students, as well as aligning with ASU classes and curricula. As Jessica and Chimereze built their initial recommendation list, they collaborated with faculty and Mimmo to gather recommendations on pertinent materials that would enrich the content and provide valuable insights to their audience.

After their group project presentation, Mimmo suggested that Jessica and Chimereze partner with the ASU Library to showcase their curated book collection. He proposed expanding their title list and collaborating with library staff to create a physical book display. He emphasized that a featured book



Jessica Hladik (student curator) and Mimmo Bonanni (librarian) posing in front of the Ecofeminist Expressions featured collection in its permanent location.

collection would enable other students to engage with their suggested titles and learn more about ecofeminism.

Collaboration and Development

To expand on the project, Mimmo facilitated a collaboration with Cisco who specializes in developing collections and creating book exhibits. He reached out to Corie to discuss creating a book exhibit based on the students' curated list. Corie enthusiastically agreed that an ecofeminism exhibit would be an excellent addition to the featured collection program. They envisioned creating a book exhibit with additional titles that highlighted the collaborative efforts of librarians, library staff, and ASU students.

This project illustrates the critical role librarians and library staff can play in facilitating student research and academic development. Together, Mimmo and Corie initiated a partnership with Jessica and Chimereze to develop an innovative featured collection for library users. Mimmo provided expert input on metadata tools like WorldCat, introduced relevant academic research titles, and incorporated film titles to enrich the exhibit. Corie augmented these efforts by expanding the title list to create a more comprehensive and robust collection. Their combined expertise, along with their valuable student contributions, resulted in a diverse and interdisciplinary exhibit designed to benefit students studying sustainability, humanities, and the social sciences.⁷

Featured Collection Program and Its History

Featured collections in the ASU Library are the products of collaborations between librarians, library staff, and communities to create meaningful learning and engagement experiences with print resources. They reflect the interests, needs, and diversity of their patrons, featuring a range of voices and perspectives that may not be adequately represented in traditional library collections. Collaborating with the community ensures that library collections are relevant and engaging, fostering a sense of ownership and connection with the library. More relevant and engaging collections resonate with the community the ASU Library serves. Community-curated collections often feature a diverse range of voices and perspectives, promoting inclusivity and helping to broaden the horizons of library users by exposing them to a wider assortment of viewpoints and experiences. They can also help promote literacy and lifelong learning by providing patrons access to books that are personally relevant and interesting to them.

This program was born from the Future of Print initiative, supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, which spent three years developing methods for the ASU Library to implement a new vision for inclusive and engaging print collections.⁸ Featured collections can take various forms, such as print book collections, featured



Jessica Hladik (student curator) browsing the books included in her featured collection, Ecofeminist Expressions.

displays aligned with heritage months, or online compilations of resources. Each featured collection creatively uses library spaces and resources to engage ASU communities.

Collection Development Process

Jessica and Chimereze's final project from the "Gendering Peace and Security" Humanities Lab was a list of 10 book recommendations and an affiliated website about ecofeminism. Mimmo helped them use WorldCat, Book Shop, and Book Finder as tools to select titles, reflecting a smaller-scale version of the curation process used for featured collections. To further develop the collection, Corie suggested exploring resources like *The New York Times*, *Electric Literature*, and *Book Riot* for curated book recommendations based on themes and publication dates. These platforms, along with crowd-sourced resources like *Goodreads* and *StoryGraph*, helped the featured collection expand to 50 to 80 books related to ecofeminism.

The project team of Jessica, Chimereze, Mimmo, and Corie met to discuss details and timelines associated with the featured collection, agreeing to continue working within the theme of ecofeminism. They used a shared Google Sheets template to collaborate on building the book list, including columns for book title, author, publisher, year of publication, and ISBN. The team used this collaborative approach to refine the collection, ensuring that it was comprehensive and well-curated.

Exhibit Design

Designing the Ecofeminist Expressions collection included such elements as location, signage, marketing collateral, and collection description. The Hayden Library on the ASU Tempe campus has a wide range of collection spaces, so Corie took collaborators on a tour and explained the benefits of each location. The team initially displayed the Ecofeminist Expressions featured collection on the first floor in a mobile display, collaborating with our graphic designer, Moshé Douglas, to create an eye-catching sign with natural elements. Later, we moved it to the second floor, in a high-traffic area for students, to enhance its visibility and impact. The team also collaborated on a collection description to contextualize the collection and give thanks to the collaborators for reference purposes. Featured collections are often installed by project teams, but due to scheduling conflicts, Corie installed the display and then shared it with the larger group.

Outcomes

The launch of the Ecofeminist Expressions featured collection at Hayden Library in January 2024 marked a significant achievement. It spotlighted crucial issues at the intersection of gender equality and environmentalism, and it also demonstrated how impactful a collaboration between ASU students and library staff can be. The collection achieved a 50 percent circulation rate, reflecting its popularity and resonance within the ASU community,



Ecofeminist Expressions featured collection showcased on a mobile display to launch the collection in the main library lobby.

indicating strong engagement with the target audience, and highlighting the value of collaborative projects in academic settings.⁹

The collection's inclusion in an ASU News article further underscored its significance by drawing attention to the ongoing collaboration between faculty and the ASU Library. The project set a precedent for future academic and community-oriented initiatives, showcasing how librarians can support academic success through innovative and meaningful collaborations. The initiative also expanded the representation of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) authors on the subject of ecofeminism in the ASU Library collection, ensuring richer, more diverse perspectives and fostering a broader understanding of critical issues.

Conclusion

The Ecofeminist Expressions featured collection at Hayden Library is an example of the transformative potential of interdisciplinary collaborations within academic settings. By integrating student-led initiatives with the expertise of librarians and faculty, the project enriched the library's offerings while also creating a dynamic learning experience that engaged the ASU community on important social issues. This collection exemplifies how libraries can go beyond their traditional roles, acting as catalysts for dialogue, learning, and change. The success of this initiative highlights the importance of inclusivity and representation in academic resources, setting a collaboration standard for future projects that seek to connect scholarly work and student research interests with real-world impact. //

Notes

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