

Yale Students Curate Library Exhibits



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In 2015, the Yale University Library launched a three-year pilot program to provide students with opportunities to curate exhibits and display research. "Student Research at Yale University Library," on view from mid-fall through the end of the spring semester, highlights four exceptional student research projects. The selected students curate small, facsimile-based displays that incorporate resources available at the Yale Library. The exhibit not only shows the results of the students' research, but also emphasizes the breadth and accessibility of the library's collections. For example, the most recent exhibit featured primary sources available through Manuscripts and Archives, the East Asia Library, and the Beinecke Library, among others.

The annual "Senior Exhibit Project" selects one senior undergraduate student to create a larger exhibit based on his or her senior essay. The exhibit is installed in May and remains on view until the start of the fall semester. The process of developing a thesis into a visual display often encourages the student to approach his or her topic from a new perspective and make additional discoveries. Stephanie Tomasson (Jonathan Edwards '16), the most recent student curator, created an exhibit that examined comic books as tools for both entertainment and sociopolitical commentary. The visual nature of her topic lent itself particularly well to the curatorial opportunity, and Tomasson realized that adapting her research for an exhibit allowed her to make connections that she could not necessarily make in a written essay.

The selected student curators have approached their projects with imagination, enthusiasm, and professionalism. A curator's talk and reception accompany each of these exhibits and have been well-attended by classmates, faculty, library staff, and the general public. Curatorial work at Yale Library allows students to share current and ongoing research through an experience that is challenging, hands-on, and incredibly rewarding.

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