

Linguistics Professor Claire Bown to curate 2020-21 Model Research Collection



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Professor of Linguistics Claire Bown has been selected to curate the second annual Bass Library Model Research Collection. Her project, to be displayed during the 2020-21 academic year, will explore the intersection of language and society.

“Language is everywhere: it’s one of the key ways we interact with the world around us, through the words we use and the way those words categorize the world,” Bown wrote in her proposal. “Yet it’s so ubiquitous we often take it for granted.”

Developed as part of the 2019 renovation of Bass Library, the annually rotating collection of around 1000 volumes is selected and arranged to show how researchers use library resources to investigate a specific topic or question.

“The Model Research Collection exemplifies the depth and breadth of Yale Library collections and, at the same time, offers a hands-on, interactive experience of how scholars work,” said Jae Rossman, director of Area Studies and Humanities Research Support and liaison librarian for the collection.

The inaugural model research collection, “Find a Set/Find a Text,” curated by Laura Wexler, professor of American

studies and women's, gender, and sexuality studies was unveiled in October 2019 and was on display when Yale Library buildings closed in March. The 2020-21 collection is scheduled to be installed in September.

Bown plans to assemble a broad range of print and electronic resources ranging from general works to scholarly texts and datasets. Her goal, she wrote, is "to make language more visible by showing the different ways it contributes to the study of our lives: how language gives a window into the mind and brain; how language is acquired by children, how languages are lost and created around the world, and how language can be used (like archaeology with words) to study the past."

Bown is a historical linguist who researches language change and language documentation in Indigenous Australia, with particular attention to the question of how language changes. She works with speakers of endangered languages, with archival sound and print materials, and she uses computational and phylogenetic methods.

Bown's Model Research Collection will also mark a milestone in the historical development of linguistics as an academic discipline. The year 2020 is likely the 150th anniversary of the first linguistics class taught in the United States. Based on Yale College catalog listings, it appears that the class, on the "study of language," was first taught by William Dwight Whitney in 1870. The linguistics track for the bachelor of philosophy degree at Yale was established in 1871-72.

For more information about the Model Research Collection program, contact jae.rossman@yale.edu [1].

Image: Claire Bown poses in Bass Library in front of the 2019-20 Model Research Collection, curated by Prof. Laura Wexler. Photo by Joanna Carmona.

Source

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