

University of York Library, Antonio Garcia Fernandez,
antonio.garciafernandez@york.ac.uk

'See Yourself on the Shelf' was a project that aimed to highlight materials we already hold in our Library and Archives on particular topics or themes around diversity and inclusivity. Student Curators would bring their creativity, voice and experiences along with their curiosity and research skills to 'curate' displays, events and materials to share and educate the University community. They would share digital lists of resources to ensure that the works remain easy to find and follow up, and also had the opportunity to develop our existing collections further through adding new materials.

The project aligned with the University of York Statement of approach to decolonising and diversifying the curriculum and with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, especially as it would help to embed 'resources to support equality, diversity and inclusion activity within faculties, departments, colleges and professional services'.

One of the main objectives of this project was to build student-led collections around topics they felt passionate about in relation to diversification and decolonisation using current holdings and making new purchases. These collections have been made publicly available and promoted on our web pages and social media:

- See Yourself on the Shelf - Reimagining Africa, by Kristen Harding
(<https://subjectguides.york.ac.uk/your-voice/ReimaginingAfrica>)

- See Yourself on the Shelf - Challenging perceptions: being anti racist , by Celia Edwards
(<https://subjectguides.york.ac.uk/your-voice/challengingperceptions>)

Both pages include a link to their respective blog post.

Engagement data shows that 'See yourself on the shelf' guides have been visited over 800 times. The blogs have over 200 views. These figures are quite impressive, even if we account for staff visits while we supported the student.

The budget spent was low. Although this shows that the curators found material in our current collections, we would have liked to have added more new titles.

We initially intended to have a physical display in the library for each curation, but this was not possible due to the level of restriction we had in place. Perhaps this is something to consider for future curations.

Contact with the student curators was made challenging due to the pandemic restrictions at that time. Most of our meetings were held over Zoom; more face-to-face contact, both formal and informal, may have helped the students when they were struggling to meet deadlines or when they needed support more generally.

We had a lot of interest from the student body. We received 87 applications, which made it very hard when it came to select only a few for interviews. At the same time, it was an indication of the high level of interest from students on tackling important matters.

We are keeping an eye on the level of engagement from our community with the content created.

As we are hoping to continue running this work over the coming years. we aim to create a large collection of material curated by students, rather than academics and researchers, as we see these groups are the main ones who contribute to building the library's collections.

We tag the titles purchased by the student curators, so we can evaluate their usage by looking at levels of loans, titles added to reading lists, additional copies purchased due to demand.

We are also keen on building up web content that can be accessed by our readers, and that our students can feel proud of and that they can contribute towards in future iterations.

We have seen similar initiatives in place at other universities, University of Sussex being a clear connection, as they presented at a conference I attended.

There is a strong interest in diversifying collections, and this approach helps to bring in the students voice into building up the library's content.

There is also a benefit to making this work paid opportunity for them. The curators found the work incredibly enriching and in their feedback they highlighted how valuable it was from a skill set point of view. They learned to work with several new systems, understood some library processes much better (metadata related) and gained exposure a working environment unfamiliar to them.

Update 11th December 2023

This year's student curators topics were
[Platforming transgender voices](#) - Tilly Edney Harrison
[Unveiling Eastern Europe](#) - Ania Kaczynska

Previous curator's work is archived on the webpage ([See Yourself On The Shelf](#)) and all books listed on the curator's reading lists are tagged in the [Library catalogue](#). We also made a few changes to the second year of the project.

Changes to the centralised intern programme meant that the student curators internship was at the start of the Summer vacation.

Before the interview, the candidates were given the interview questions. We found that they all came with a topic, ideas on how to promote the collections and even ways of researching book lists for their chosen topics.

The interns no longer check reading lists (we found this was too time consuming to fit in around their other work during their 10 week placement).

They arranged a physical exhibition to showcase their topics.