

The Future of Print Report: Barrett Little Library

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Photo of book display at Barrett Honors College

About the Future of Print

ASU Library was awarded a \$381K grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to experiment with different ways in which libraries present print materials to the public. We know that information is more digitally accessible than ever before. As students turn to what is quick and convenient for them, ASU Library is exploring how to present our print materials in ways that remain engaging and relevant to the twenty-first century user. Through a series of book displays, The Future of Print team hopes to gain a sense for how students perceive print collections, how they use the library, and what it takes to engage them in physical books. For more information on our projects, visit

<https://lib.asu.edu/futureprint>

Research Questions

We are interested to see the different ways that students interact with print books. Specifically, we wanted to observe how students use print books outside of library spaces. Were they more likely to read a book if they found it in a coffee shop? Additionally, this was an opportunity to see how students responded to content selected by their peers.

Philosophy

Academic libraries typically display featured collections of books that have been selected by staff members, usually based on widely-known themes such as Banned Books Week. While library staff have the expertise and the continued desire to create meaningful learning experiences, students have also proven time and time again their willingness to contribute. At a multi-campus institution serving over 100,000 students, we wanted to test whether targeting key populations of students that have a pre-existing relationship with the Library would receive a better response than trying to collaborate with as many ASU students as possible. Students at the Barrett Honors College are already required to have a high-level of engagement on campus and may even be more likely to have used Library resources due to the thesis component of their program. They also have a group of Barrett Student Ambassadors who act as liaisons between their college and the Library to communicate programs and research skills. These considerations created a natural opportunity for us to partner with the honors students and host a collection in their space.

We also wanted to observe how people engage with print books outside of traditional library settings. In libraries, books are catalogued and organized according to classification systems. Even books being temporarily featured in a themed display have borrowing policies requiring users to return them by a certain date. We decided to purchase a set of new books that would not be owned by the Library in order to learn how people used books that they are not required to return. We hoped they might be likely to discover something new to read and leave something of their own to share.

Full Selection Methodology

ASU Library planned for students from Barrett to implement a take-one, leave-one book collection housed in the Burning B coffee shop at the Barrett Honors Complex. Michelle Ashley Gohr, the First Year Experience Librarian, initially collaborated with a variety of

stakeholders and librarians (First Year Experience mentors, college advisors, etc.) across campus to develop a list of close to one hundred books of recommended reading, based on interactions and feedback from work with students. This [list](#), with the help of liaison librarians Mimmo Bonanni and Ed Oetting, was completed during the summer of 2018.

For the purpose of this project, Alexandra Aragon, the Director of Honors Academic Services at Barrett, The Honors College, indicated that she would prefer a smaller initial collection seed of ten to fifteen books directly selected by the current Barrett Student Ambassadors Fall 2018 cohort. The Barrett Student Ambassadors are chosen by Barrett, The Honors College, to serve as leaders and guides, helping their peers to succeed during their time at ASU. They consist of students who exemplify leadership to their peers, specifically incoming freshmen, and whose responsibilities are to help provide research assistance for the Barrett Thesis and library outreach events. By asking the Barrett Student Ambassadors to select titles they personally enjoyed, we hoped their peers would respond positively to these print books. They were an ideal group to work with as they were already focused on being student leaders, supporting ASU programs, and connecting to their peers.

To form the collection, we also partnered with the Library's Engagement and Learning Student Ambassador, Alexis Juarez, who works closely with the Library to create engaging experiences for undergraduate students. Alexis and three Barrett Ambassadors each provided Michelle with their top favorite books for the initial "little library" book purchase. Their suggestions were compiled into a [new list](#) of eighteen titles.

The Future of Print team saw an opportunity to engage students and allow them to take ownership of the collections. As part of this ownership, Barrett Ambassadors would continually monitor the small collection and encourage residential hall residents and visitors to interact with and leave their favorite titles. These books were purchased brand new and not catalogued as library books, to allow students to take home and keep a book, while leaving one of their own.

Successes

- By collaborating with the Barrett Ambassadors and setting up a collection in a well-trafficked area, we increased student interest in library projects. This project resulted in conversations about ASU Library's print initiatives.
- This project allowed us to strengthen the relationship between Barrett students and the Library.

- Our metrics for engagement were positive each week showing that students are choosing to participate.
- Although we only monitored the Little Library from January to April, it continues to grow and change at the Burning B coffee shop. This shows the potential for tracking how collections thrive outside of library spaces.

Challenges

- A significant challenge in working with students is communication and scheduling. The majority of information sharing took place over email, because meetings were not well-attended. This also made it difficult later on when trying to get an article about this project in the Barrett Newsletter. The writer wanted to interview a student representative, and due to student scheduling, this was not able to happen.

Assessment Analysis/Results

Books

Though the collection started with only 18 books purchased by the ASU Library, by April [67 books](#) were in the Little Library, most of which were added by students. Throughout this time, 38 books were taken and 9 books returned. Books that were taken were also often replaced by a new book. I was also expecting that students might use this bookcase as a place to drop off old textbooks but was pleasantly surprised that it remained a space for popular books.

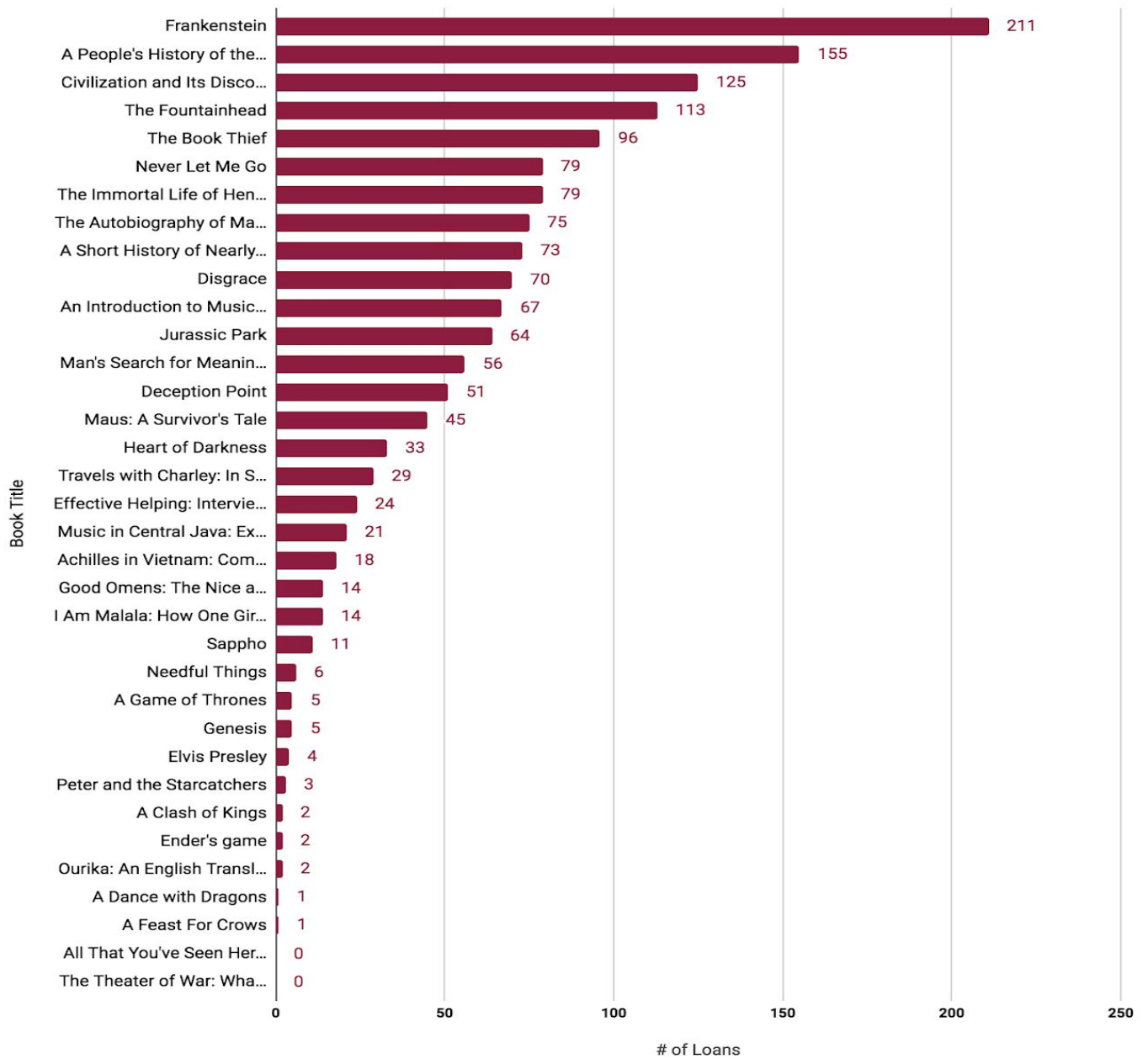
These books were not library books, because we wanted people to keep them and leave their own copies. However, I was curious if the titles in this collection were titles that the ASU community had borrowed from the Library in the past. To answer this question, I used ALMA Analytics to find that we have Library holdings for 35 out of 67 of these books, many with multiple copies or editions. This means that we may have had five different editions of *Frankenstein* or two copies of *The Fountainhead*. I also used ALMA Analytics to determine the total number of loans for each title, which represents the aggregation of all records under a single title and may include loans by students, faculty, staff, or external users. These totals include all loans since the book was acquired.

Only two of the books on the list had never been checked out. The top five books checked out from the Library are:

- *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley
 - 211 loans
- *A People's History of the United States* by Howard Zinn
 - 155 loans
- *Civilization and Its Discontents* by Sigmund Freud
 - 125 loans
- *The Fountainhead* by Ayn Rand
 - 113 loans
- *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak
 - 96 loans

The infographic below represents the [complete list of loaned items](#).

Popularity of Books Based on Number of Library Loans



Bar chart showing the number of ASU Library loans for books included in Little Library.

Gemstones

We asked students to put a gemstone in a jar to tell us what they thought about the Little Library. Rather than count the gemstones, we took [photos](#) throughout the four months and simply observed whether or not students were using them.

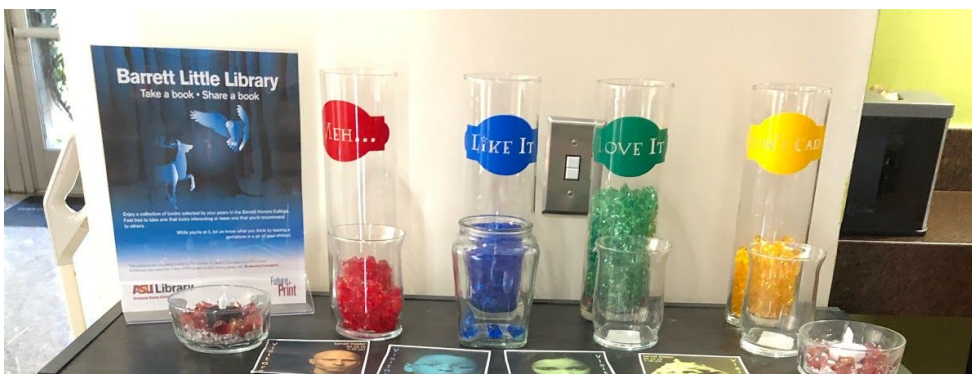
Week 2:



Week 8:



Week 11:



Discussion

Prior to setting up the Little Library, the bookshelf acted as a place to drop off old newspapers, textbooks, and other unwanted items. This space is in the main building for Barrett, surrounded by lounges and a frequently-used coffee shop. We were able to take an unused space that had high visibility and transform it into a space for engagement. This also allowed the Barrett Ambassadors to learn about and participate in a new project which they can now share with their peers. This collection continues to be available for students. We hope they will take and leave books, rotate the theme, and share with their peers.

In the future, we will consider implementing library projects outside of library spaces such as in other residence halls. This experience has shown us the diverse reading interests of ASU students, which is an important finding as we integrate more popular fiction and popular works in our print collections. We hope to use print collections to expand student education, beyond traditional texts and modes of learning, by appealing to the academic and personal interests of those we serve.

Partnerships

Barrett Honors College

Press

[Barrett News Channel](#)

[Library Channel](#)

Appendix

Resources Mentioned:

- [Books Purchased by ASU Library](#)
- [Barrett Little Library Book List](#)
- [Res Hall Book List](#)
- [Display Photos](#)