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OUTREACH PLAN ASSIGNMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Edward Albee American Theatre Special Collection at the Washington Performing Arts Library is dedicated to collecting, preserving, and providing access to American theatre rare books, manuscripts, photographs, ephemera, film, audio, and other special materials. The collection is housed within the Washington Performing Arts Library located in Washington, D.C. While the Edward Albee American Theatre Special Collection is popular amongst graduate students and theatre professionals, there are untapped audiences in the theatrical community. The Edward Albee American Theatre Special Collection plans to focus their FY 2014 outreach efforts on local high school theatre students who can use the collection's materials in their theatrical pursuits.

OUTREACH PLAN OF ACTION

Overall Description and Goals

The Edward Albee American Theatre Special Collection (hereafter referred to as "the collection") at the Washington Performing Arts Library (hereafter referred to as "the library") FY 2014 outreach plan has three main efforts: programs, partnerships, and digital presence. This three-fold plan will give students many avenues through which to use the collection's materials, which will allow for increased use, visibility, publicity, and donors.

Through the "programs" initiative, the collection aims to emulate the Folger Shakespeare Library's performance workshops, student theatre festivals, and school-specific activities (Folger Shakespeare Library, 2013c, 2013d). These programs allow students to "take ownership of Shakespeare" (Folger Shakespeare Library, 2013d) through research, analysis, re-contextualization, and performance. The Folger is a great example of how an institution can make books and manuscripts "come alive" through targeted, interactive learning opportunities for students. The collection plans to follow this example through monthly performance workshops and exclusive research hours, which will allow students to take ownership of a play within the collection, with direction from theatre and research professionals. These programs will give

theatre students professional experience and teach them that theatre primary source materials are critical to the success of a theatrical production. While this interaction with the collection's materials might not be traditional or research-based, as Welch said "Know what is in your collection so you can identify possible partners and projects...understand their specific needs will be different than those of more traditional researchers" (Welch, Hoffius, & Fox, 2011, p. 60).

Through the "partnerships" initiative, the collection aims to emulate the Shubert Archives, the Folger Shakespeare Library, and the Conjuring Arts Research Center. The Shubert has great respect for theatre students, allowing them access to materials that are restricted to the public (Shubert Archives, 2013). The Folger provides seminars and classes to high school students, which can be taken for school credit (Folger Shakespeare Library, 2013a). Lastly, the Conjuring Arts Research Center hires professionals to visit at-risk children and teach a "Hocus Pocus" performance class (The Conjuring Arts Research Center, 2013). The collection plans to combine these approaches and work with local high schools directly to create classes which integrate with current curriculum, using the model Julia Hendry outlines in her paper "Primary sources in K-12 education: opportunities for archives" (Hendry, 2007). The American theatre history in the collection should integrate with most high school Theatre, English, and History classes, but the collection librarians can also teach classes on research methods and archival science. This will not only give visibility to the collection, but will also teach a wide range of students about primary source research through "community-based education," (Fernekas & Rosenberg, 2008, p. 167) a form of education that Fernekas proved invaluable in his case study of a partnership between Hunterdon Central Regional High School and Rutgers University Special Collections.

In the last initiative, "digital presence," the collection draws on personal experience and recent research on internet use [89% of high school students use social media sites; 94% use Google for research (Brenner & Smith, 2013; Purcell et al., 2012)] to prioritize efforts. The collection already has strong social media and blog strategies, and plans to leverage that into targeted content for high school theatre students. This effort emulates the Folger Shakespeare Library's education and performance blog "Making a Scene: Shakespeare in the Classroom" (Folger Shakespeare Library, 2013b). The collection realizes that most social media efforts increase

the collection's visibility, and are usually not successful in creating increased use and/or reference interaction (Griffin & Taylor, 2013). In response to those concerns, the collection plans to focus this initiative on digitizing the remainder of its audio and video collection, with a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (National Historical Publications and Records Commission, 2013). This digitization effort will increase direct access and student use of the collection's materials. As an ancillary effort, the collection will complete a one-time update to its website, and emulate the University of Washington's Drama Library's efforts to become a one-stop-shop for theatre students looking for materials to prepare for auditions and productions (University of Washington, 2013).

Overall, the collection's FY 2014 outreach plan will make the collection materials "come alive" for high school theatre students and enforce what Traister calls the "ongoing as opposed to the special function of the materials" (Traister, 2003, p. 92).

Below is a complete outline of outreach tasks, along with timelines and deliverables.

Tasks

Task 1. Programs

Task 1a. Monthly Performance Workshop

Once a month, local high school theatre students will participate in a day-long (11AM-5PM) performance workshop. This workshop will study, analyze, plan, direct, and perform a scene from a play within the collection. The student performers will research past performances and actors to make informed choices about their character and acting techniques. The student staggers (directors, crew, costumers, etc.) will research past productions to develop a directorial vision. Using the research, the performers will fill out character sheets, choose an acting style, and memorize their lines; the staggers will lead the actors through staging, and develop renderings of set pieces, costumes, and contextual vision. At 6PM, there will be a free, public performance in the library's auditorium where the students will present their work. This workshop is aimed at high school theatre students, but is open to children from ages 11-18 and will cost \$40 for each participant. This workshop will be led by a paid theatre professional from the collection's network of researchers, with aid from a librarian.

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This workshop is intended to provide professional theatre performance experience to high school students while teaching them how valuable research is to a theatrical production.

Deliverables: Monthly 6-hour workshops with final performance

Timeline: 4 months of planning; ongoing monthly workshops and communication

Task 1b. First Friday

On the first Friday of every month, the collection will be open exclusively to high school students from 5-7PM (normal hours on Friday are 10AM-5PM). Librarians and volunteers will be available for research and reference questions.

This effort will enforce the importance of research to a theatrical production and give high school theatre students specialized access to theatre primary source materials and expertise.

Deliverable: Open research hours first Friday of every month

Timeline: 1 month of planning; ongoing event

Task 2. Partnerships

Task 2a. Partnerships with Local High Schools

The collection will partner with local high schools to visit and teach supplemental, curriculum-based classes on American theatre history, research methods, and/or use of archives/special collections. These classes will last an hour and will be scheduled bi-monthly, or at the discretion of school administration. The librarians will work with high school administrators and teachers to prepare classes that integrate with current curriculum, providing students with a well-rounded experience. The librarians will utilize the collection's network of researchers, board of trustees, donors, and other advocates to develop these partnerships; the library already has a great relationship with local communities. Additionally, librarians will use these partnerships to visit high school theatre programs during rehearsal or class time to teach specialized classes on the history of that season's productions, as appropriate.

This partnership has multiple benefits for both the collection and students. The classes will provide students with advanced skills in primary source research, allow librarians to promote other outreach activities, and serve as a platform for interactions and ongoing relationships

between collection librarians and students. All of these will lead to increased visibility and use of the collection.

Deliverable: Partnership with 5 local high schools

Timeline: 1 month to secure partnerships; ongoing communication

Deliverables: Bi-monthly classes on American theatre history, research methods, archives/special collections use, and/or current school productions

Timeline: 2 months of planning; classes bi-monthly during school year

Task 2b. Partnership with Maryland State Thespians Association

The collection will reach out to the Maryland State Thespians Association, which hosts local theatre festivals and competitions for grades K-12, to inquire about a partnership. This partnership will give the collection increased visibility in the high school theatre community. The scope of the partnership will be on an as-needed basis for both parties. Some possibilities include: (1) cross-promotion of websites and activities; (2) collection volunteer work at competitions and festivals; and (3) free-to-use audition material from the collection.

This partnership will serve as a gateway for the collection to interact with students, parents, and other members of the local high school theatre community.

Deliverable: Partnership with Maryland State Thespians Association

Timeline: 1 month to secure partnership; ongoing communication

Task 3. Digital Presence

Task 3a. Digitization

Due to the generosity of the library, the collection has already digitized much of its paper and photographic collection. For this outreach plan, the collection will shift its focus onto digitizing audio and video materials for inclusion into a searchable online database.

Currently, the collection has digitized 1,200 audio files and 925 video files, which leaves 3,800 audio recordings and 1,100 video recordings to be digitized. The collection plans to digitize these remaining materials as a result of this outreach plan. This digitization effort will require a grant; the collection plans to apply for the National Historical Publications and Records Commission

(NHPRC) Digitizing Historical Records grant, which awards \$150,000 to qualifying institutions. The audio and video recordings of American theatre performances in the collection are perfect candidates for this grant. The collection librarians have ample experience in grant writing, as they have successfully written and/or contributed to winning grants for the collection and the library.

This digitization effort will greatly benefit high school students, as audio and video recordings are much more accessible and helpful to theatre directors and performers than paper-based records.

Deliverable: 2014 grant submission to NHPRC

Timeline: 4 months of planning

Deliverable: Digitization of remaining audio and video recordings

Timeline: 1.5-2 years

Deliverable: Inclusion of digital material in accessible online database

Timeline: 6 months

Task 3b. Social Media

The collection plans to redirect its strong social media presence towards high school students for FY 2014. The collection's social media staff assistant will continue to utilize accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr, with 25% of posts every week targeted towards high school theatre students. While this effort will commence as soon as the proposal is accepted, the social media assistant will also coordinate with librarians to get their field knowledge (from Tasks 1 and 2) of what information is important to high school theatre students.

Utilizing social media will lead to increased visibility, publicity, and a platform for recruiting new participants for Task 2 and 3 outreach activities.

Deliverable: 25% weekly targeted social media content

Timeline: Ongoing

Task 3c. Blog

The collection has an academic blog, but will set up another blog focused on performance. Librarians, professionals, and high school theatre students will be invited to write posts and contribute to the blog. High school theatre students will also be given the opportunity to use the blog during promotions for their school productions, as long as the posts integrate the collection materials. Blog posts will be scheduled 2-3 times a month, depending on the schedules of guest bloggers. Contingency posts will be written ahead of time and published if a planned post falls through. The blog will be created and managed by the social media staff assistant.

The blog will be another gateway through which the collection can interact and provide learning opportunities for high school theatre students, as it gives them a platform to share their love of theatre and, eventually, theatre research.

Deliverable: 2-3 blog posts a month about performance and the collection materials

Timeline: 1 month of planning; ongoing communication

Task 3d. Website

A webpage will be added to the collection's website with resources to aid high school theatre students in auditions and performances. The collection's website utilizes a Content Management System which allows for the creation of additional pages without help from a website designer. This will be an easy-to-use, update, and maintain page which will include, but is not limited to (1) list of monologues; (2) staging examples; (3) costumes; (4) performance tips from professionals; and (5) audio/video clips of performances.

This webpage will reinforce the collection's usefulness to high school theatre students, and will hopefully become a primary online resource for audition and performance materials.

Deliverable: Webpage dedicated to high school theatre students

Timeline: 2 months

Resources

Below is an overview of the human and additional resources needed to complete each task in the outreach plan of action. These resources are estimates only.

| Tasks | Human Resources | Additional Resources |
|--|---|--|
| Task 1. Programs | | |
| Task 1a. Monthly Performance Workshop | 1 professional and 1 librarian: 2 hours/week for 4 months of planning; 7 hours once a month | \$80 – professional fee \$100 – food, drink, paper supplies \$400 – external print and online advertising budget |
| Task 1b. First Friday | 3-4 librarians: 2 hours once a month | Possible HVAC and electrical costs \$50 – internal print and online advertising budget |
| Task 2. Partnerships | | |
| Task 2a. Partnerships with Local High Schools | 1-2 librarians: 1-2 hours/week for 2 months of planning; 1-2 hours/week for class and transportation | \$20/class – gas/food/travel |
| Task 2b. Partnership with Maryland State Thespians Association | 1-2 librarians: 1 hour/week for 1 month of planning; 3-4 hours/day for during festivals | |
| Task 3. Digital Presence | | |
| Task 3a. Digitization | 1-2 librarians: 1-2 hours/week for 4 months of planning 1-2 part-time assistants: 5-10 hours/week Digitization professional or company | \$150,000 (from NHPRC grant) |
| Task 3b. Social Media | Social media staff assistant: 2 hours/week | |
| Task 3c. Blog | Social media staff assistant: 2 hours/week Entire staff: 2-3 hours/month Volunteers/guest-bloggers: 2 hours as needed | |
| Task 3d. Website | 2-3 librarians: 2-3 hours/week for 2 months of planning 1 librarian: 3 hours to set up webpage 1 librarian to provide ongoing maintenance and updates as needed | |

Evaluation

Programs and Partnerships

Every three months, the librarians will assess all programs and partnerships. As soon as this plan is put into action, direct user feedback will be solicited through: (1) existing collection and library online and internal feedback surveys; (2) additional program- and partnership-specific surveys; and (3) in-person interactions.

If solicited feedback is negative *and* enrollment in programs and high school partnerships is low (programs: less than five people; partnership: less than five schools), the collection will consider scaling back the programs to 1-2 hour monthly workshops and first Friday hours every other month, and will hold partnerships with 1-2 schools. If solicited feedback is positive *and* enrollment in programs and high school partnerships is high (programs: more than 20 people; partnerships: more than five schools, 2-3 classes a week), the collection will consider adding another workshop, increasing study hours for high school students, and hiring 2 staff assistants to take over teaching classes at partnership schools. *Note:* The partnership with the Maryland State Thespians Association is on an as-needed basis, librarians will assess the usefulness of this partnership through monitoring the opportunities for increased visibility within the high school theatre community. This partnership can be scaled back or dropped if deemed inefficient.

While these programs and partnerships take priority in FY 2014, the collection will build flexibility into scheduling and relationships. If librarians need to cancel a class or workshop due to other priorities (namely, the ongoing operations of the collection), a contingency plan will be in place, including well-pace advertisements of cancellations and tips for how to deal with student and partnership backlash.

Digital Presence

Every three months, the librarians will assess all digital initiatives. Social media/blog assessment will be evaluated through manual observation of (1) likes, comments, and followers; (2) targeted in-person or online feedback from specific social media/blog users; (3) general online surveys on how users use the collection's social media/blog; and (4) existing collection and library online and internal feedback surveys. Webpage and digitization efforts will be evaluated through: (1) content management system user data; (2) Google website analytics; (3) targeted in-person or

online feedback from specific researchers; and (4) existing collection and library online and internal feedback surveys.

For the social media/blog initiatives: if comments, likes, followers, and blog traffic are lower than normal social media activity, the collection will consider reverting back to its original social media plan, with no more material targeted towards high school theatre students. Social media is the lowest priority of the digital presence initiative, so it can be dropped if other priorities arise or if interest is low. The creation of the theatre student-specific webpage is a one-time action, this effort will only need maintenance as-needed and does not need to be removed if interest is low. If feedback and user data on this webpage is high, and there are repeated requests to add more material, the collection will consider expanding this feature. The digitization effort is of the highest priority, as it will increase user access and has been a part of the collection's overall strategic plan for the last five years. Since this effort will not be completed until FY 2016 at the earliest, user data cannot be evaluated until that time. However, since a grant will allow the collection to hire outside assistants to digitize integrate material into a database, this effort should not interfere with daily operations of the collection.

The collection recognizes that other priorities may arise during the FY 2014 efforts, and some may not want to spend time and resources on high school students. However, these efforts are critical to the ongoing success and overall mission of the collection, as high school theatre students are the future of theatre performance. Detailed justification for these efforts is outlined below.

JUSTIFICATION

There are over 100 public and private high schools in the DC metro area. On average, a local high school theatre program has 2-3 productions every school year, most of which are American plays and/or musicals. This means that there are over 300 DC metro area high school theatre productions performed every year, with hundreds more students as cast and crew members. That is a *huge* number of people in the immediate area that could greatly benefit from the Edward Albee American Theatre Special Collection, and vice versa. Until this point, the collection has focused their attention solely on outreach to theatre patrons, theatre graduate students, and theatre professionals, because they have the time, materials, and income to use and contribute to

the collection. The next generation of these targeted groups, or “future donors” (Traister, 2003, p. 96), is actively showcasing their love for theatre in the *immediate area*. High school theatre students are just beginning to understand the work that goes into putting on a production. The collection can provide these students the guidance and materials needed to develop a theatrical production. As Jones et al. (2009) said, the point of a performing arts special collection is to “reuse” the records, to encourage people to use primary sources as inspiration for new works or re-contextualization of well-known plays (Jones, Abbott, & Ross, 2009).

From interactions with the collection’s theatre professionals, it can be estimated that 50% of these high school students will go on to pursue careers in theatre. The programs, partnerships, and digital initiatives outlined in this plan are focused on reaching out and providing resources to an age group which typically feels outcast or marginalized. The collection’s willingness to serve and work with students will add more members to the collection’s network of advocates, ongoing users, and future donors. One of these students could even donate a future award-winning play manuscript to the collection.

The theatrical community is close-knit, and high school is where the true stars start to shine. The collection needs to make concentrated efforts to actively build users and donors, in addition to cultivating its current network. Building relationships with high school theatre students will be symbiotic, with the collection gaining increased visibility, use, and future donors, and students gaining access to high quality professional and academic theatre experiences.

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