



Lokier Gardens, Estevan Village, Oak Bay.

Study Leave Report
Christine Walde, Grants and Awards Librarian
January 25, 2021

As per the University of Victoria Collective Agreement, 35.20:

“Within ninety days following the completion of a Study Leave, a Librarian must submit a Study Leave report to the University Librarian that provides an account of: a) the research, scholarly activity, or professional project undertaken during the Study Leave; and b) how the Librarian expects the research, scholarly activity, or professional project undertaken during the Study Leave will contribute to or enhance the Librarian’s ability to meet changing needs in the Libraries.”

“No longer were there individual destinies; only a collective destiny, made of plague and emotions shared by all.”

- Camus

“Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favour all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamt would have come his way. I have learned a deep respect for one of Goethe's couplets:

Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it.
Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it!”

- W.H. Murray



The Economist, getting the future wrong.

Dear Jonathan,

At the time of writing this study leave report, we are rapidly approaching the one-year anniversary of January 30, 2020: the day that the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan, China as an official Public Health Emergency of International Concern. Pursuant to this day, we are approaching the equally auspicious date of March 11, 2020, when the WHO declared a global pandemic due to SARS-Cov-2.

Last January I was eagerly anticipating my first six-month study leave after working at UVic Libraries for more than eight years; the first in my professional career as an academic librarian. I had plans to take a course in Introduction to Letterpress at Emily Carr University for Art and Design in Vancouver. Attend an international artist residency in Mexico, *The Land is a Library*. Travel to Los Angeles to attend the LA Art Book Fair. Go

to Hornby Island, go to Kelowna, and finally, travel to England with my family in August for a 3-week vacation. But by March 11, all my plans to go anywhere – including my own office on the 4th floor of the university library – were scrapped. Like everyone else on the planet, my life changed irrevocably in a single day, and I was forced to adapt to the “new normal.”

While it may have been possible for me to postpone my study leave to a later date – as my partner Paul ultimately decided to do, despite our long-made plans to take our leaves together -- I stuck with it and revised my plans accordingly. While I did get to attend three out of the four classes for Introduction to Letter Press at ECUAD, the month of March was a watershed of cancellations and recalibrations. In the objectives of my revised study leave proposal (submitted and approved on April 4, 2020) I stated in an email that it was definitely more “Zen” than my original application, and that I would “...do everything I can, within whatever capacity I have and with the means to do so, to accomplish these objectives in these strange times.” They were the following:

- 1) Research, development, and implementation of my personal website to highlight my research and research-creation activities;
- 2) Complete final edits and revisions for an article about marginalia and library copies of Sylvia Plath in an upcoming anthology about Plath for Bloomsbury Press;
- 3) Research, write, and disseminate article about my role as the Grants and Awards Librarian and how I support and enhance the research activities and community engagement priorities of UVic Libraries;
- 4) Continue to work closely with the CARL-ARBC Core Competencies Working Group, which is a national committee of academic librarians working together to reframe, redefine, and rewrite the competencies for the 21st-Century research librarian;
- 5) Finish a number of research-creation projects directly related to my practice as a librarian, including: Data Poetics, a poetic exploration of library punch cards; assembly and promotion of my previously published artist's book *Bride Machine* (flask, 2018) for possible sale and/or donation to other research libraries and archives; completion of *Salvage*, an inventory of found book works, accompanied by an extensive inventory and catalogue.



Before and after. *Intro to Letterpress*, ECUAD, Vancouver.

Did I create my own website? Check. (And check out www.christinewalde.com).



PROJECTS

Bride Machine (2018)



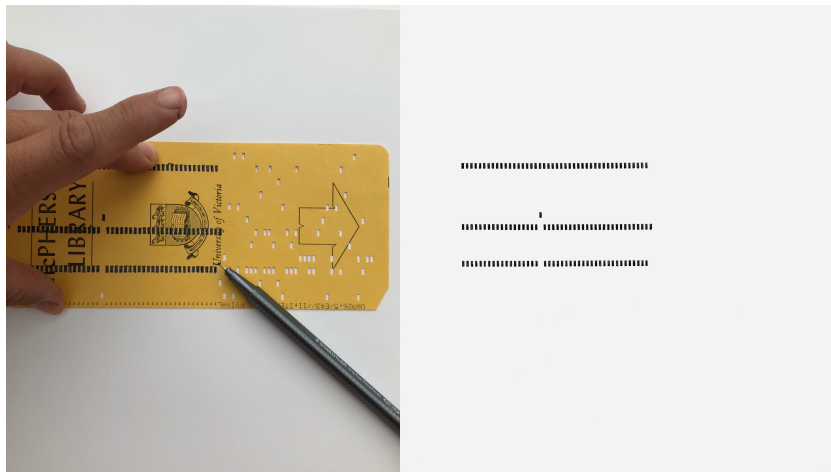
Screen shot of christinewalde.com

Did I complete the final round of edits and submit a final version of “<maniacs.>: *Sylvia Plath, Marginalia, and Citizen Critics in the Libraries of the Heterotopia*” to Anita Helle, Amanda Golden, and Maeve O’Brien for the Bloomsbury anthology on Sylvia Plath, to be published in 2021? Yes. (Though it appears there is still another round to go, as a recent email from last Friday appeared in my inbox. . .)

Did I write an article about my role as Grants and Awards Librarian? You bet I did – “Catalyzing Research, Building Capacity: Research Grants and the Academic Library Before, During, and After COVID-19” will be published as a featured 2000-word essay in *College and Research Libraries News* in 2021.

Did I work with the national CARL committee and launch the CARL Core Competencies for 21st-Century Librarians? Yes, and we continue to work towards the realization of promoting the competencies in a more robust and innovative way, and we met last week to continue the discussion.

Did I finish a number of research-creation projects related to my practice as a librarian? Yes, and no. While I continued to work on my various creative projects such as *Data Poetics*, *Salvage*, and *Bride Machine*, I ended up exploring some new work and started new projects that I had not anticipated. In the months and days that followed the announcement by the WHO, I found that my study leave evolved a little more organically than anticipated, mainly in response to what Bonnie Henry, our world-famous PHO, said we could – and couldn’t – do. To this end, I also accomplished and achieved the following, which were not included in my revised study leave plan:



Before and after. Detail from *Data Poetics*, an ongoing body of visual poetry that uses computer punch cards.

- Participated in an online poetry reading event for National Poetry Month, sponsored by Victoria Poet Laureate, John Barton. “The Worldliness of Poetry” premiered in April 2020, with Derk Wynand, Terry Ann Carter, and myself. Visit and listen here: <https://www.victoria.ca/EN/main/residents/culture/poet-laureate/poet-laureate/worldliness-of-poetry.html>;



- Participated and presented “In a New Order” (using 3D-printed words from the Digital Scholarship Commons!) as part of *Concrete is Porous*, a group exhibition of concrete poetry for [STANZAS](#), a city-wide, month-long celebration that explored the overlap of visual and literary arts, organized by the Victoria Arts Council, and which included i) *A Reading from the Ether*, an online event with renowned Canadian poet bill bissett and myself, and; ii) *LINE/break*, a curatorial round table, with poet Yvonne Blomer, writer Kim Dhillon, artist Regan Rasmussen and myself;



Installation shots of "In a New Order" – with 3D-printed letters from the DSC – in situ at The Vault at the Victoria Arts Council.

 This block contains a collage of images. On the left, there are four small, square Zoom stills showing Christine Walde speaking. On the right, there is a poster for a poetry reading event. The poster features two images: a circular arrangement of small pieces of paper with text, and an open book with a poem. The text on the poster reads:

Christine Walde, *In a New Order*, 2020

bill bissett, from *breath*, 1997-2019

A Reading from the Ether
 with bill bissett and Christine Walde
 presented as part of STANZAS produced by the Victoria Arts Council

Thursday 22 October, 4:30PM, *online event*

 At the bottom of the poster, there are logos for various organizations including the University of Victoria, British Columbia Arts Council, and the Victoria Arts Council.

Zoom stills taken from poetry reading with bill bissett, as advertised.

- Participated in *Hiding in Plain Sight*, a virtual group exhibition curated and organized by Ron Benner for the Embassy Cultural House in London, Ontario, and;
- Travelled to Hornby Island for a solo, socially-distanced, two-week writing retreat at the end of September.



Reading selfie from Hornby Island.

In addition to these activities, I also read many books exclusively on the history of libraries and information. In fact, every single book I read during my study leave was related to libraries, librarianship, and information science. My purpose in doing this was not only to fill in some of the critical gaps I might have missed during my MLIS degree, but to understand the critical importance of libraries throughout history, and the organization of knowledge and information. Also, since most of my practice as an artist is based on the intersection of art and information, it was important for me to learn more about systems of organization and classification. To this end, I read the following texts, which are listed here alphabetically by author:

- Adler, Melissa. *Cruising the Library: Perversities in the Organization of Knowledge*. Fordham University Press, New York, 2017.
- Bivens-Tatum, Wayne. *Libraries and the Enlightenment*. Library Juice Press, Duluth, MN, 2012.
- Borges, Jorge L. *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*. Penguin Books, London, 2000.
- Casson, Lionel. *Libraries in the Ancient World*. Yale University Press, New Haven, 2001.
- Crawford, Alice, et al. *The Meaning of the Library: A Cultural History*. Oxford, Princeton, 2015.
- Foucault, Michel, 1926-1984. *The Order of Things: Mots Et Les Choses. English*. Routledge, London, 2002.
- Gleick, James. *The Information: A History, a Theory, a Flood*. Pantheon Books, New York, 2011.
- Murakami, Haruki. *The Strange Library*. Knopf, New York, NY, 2018
- Manguel, Alberto. *The Library at Night*. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 2008.
- Orlean, Susan. *The Library Book*. Simon and Schuster, New York, NY, 2018.
- Snowden, Edward J. *Permanent Record*. Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt and Company, New York, 2019.
- Springer, Anna-Sophie and Etienne Turpin, eds. *Fantasies of the Library*. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 2018.
- Tharp, Shannon and Sommer Browning, eds. *Poet-Librarians in the Library of Babel: Innovative Meditations on Librarianship*. Library Juice Press, Duluth, MN, 2018.

I expect the research I undertook during my study leave to contribute to or enhance my ability to meet changing needs in the Libraries in the following ways:

- 1) As a research librarian, and particularly as the Grants and Awards Librarian, **having dedicated time to work on research is necessary to developing confidence and ensuring success in participating in the scholarly conversation.** I conduct regular consultations with faculty in different disciplines from across the university on an ongoing basis. What I've realized is that I can contribute to the scholarly conversation in ways that are meaningful and insightful that other scholars cannot precisely because I am a librarian. Our interdisciplinary understanding of knowledge and the forces that shape information is profound; and it can and does transform the way that knowledge and information is transferred, now and in the future. But we have to “walk the walk and talk the talk” if we want to be taken seriously. We need the time to do our own research; and we need to understand that to support our colleagues both inside and outside the library and to advance the conversation around open scholarship.
- 2) As a librarian, and more specifically, as the current General Editor of our Libraries' publication series, I am always seeking opportunities to present knowledge in new and innovative ways. **Exploring creative approaches and applications beyond the scholarly monograph is central to the future of open scholarship** and digital citizenry. What really constitutes a “publication”? If we are to be truly “open” we need to be accepting of different research outputs – whether it's a dataset, 3D-printed objects, or a visual exhibition – and how to preserve them over time. In learning about library history, it became clear to me that books have merely been a convenient vessel for millennia because they best preserve what they contain. But that does not mean the codex will always possess that distinction, nor be surpassed by digital surrogates that can dynamically bridge their inner content with external context in multi-modal platforms.
- 3) Reading the literature is important, not only to catch up on current trends and consult other previously published historical works that may have been missed or overlooked, but in **understanding the library as an evolving ecosystem and cultural memory institution.** Reading about the history of the libraries in the Enlightenment, for example, helped me to more fully understand the interrelations between colonization and classification and the mania for order that characterized the 18th century; just as learning about the ways the Library of Congress has categorically delimited proscribed expressions of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and race to suppress difference, which I will approach in my work as Gender Studies Librarian.
- 4) Working with other librarians from across the country to create the CARL Core Competencies has been one of the most rewarding responsibilities I have had in my career as a librarian, but the document is just the beginning. **Animating and**

activating the competencies in a dynamic way to the communities we serve is fundamental to an engaged model of librarianship. Whether it was in the pages of the article I wrote for *College and Research Libraries News*, or in my exhibitions at Victoria Arts Council, I was acutely aware of the fact that I was being seen as a Canadian academic librarian and modelling those competencies. As the Libraries moves forward in its reorganization, I have a continuing responsibility to meet the changing needs of the organization through my role and the work that needs to be done.



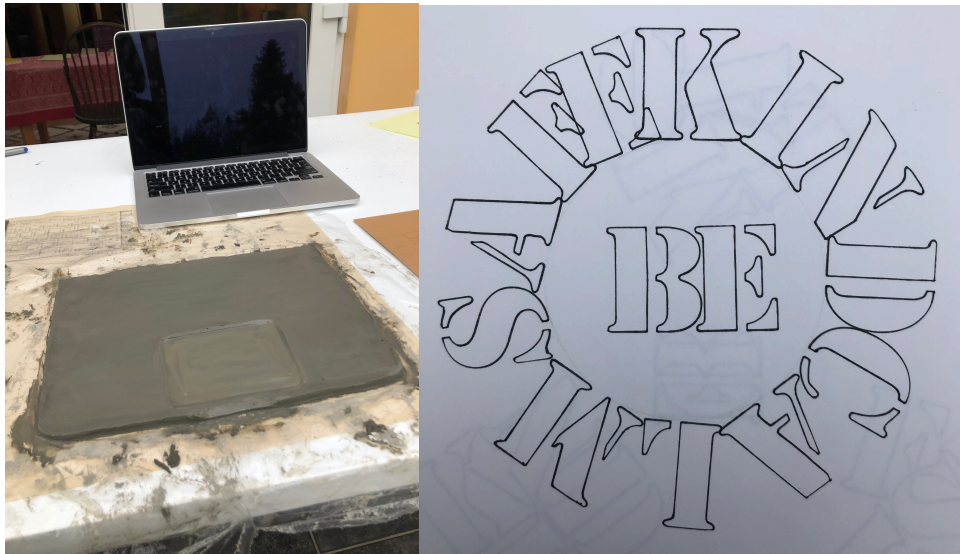
Photo taken from Willows Beach, or Sitchanalth, a major Songhees village, which was once lined with longhouses.

Overall, despite the fact that there was a pandemic, once I made the *commitment* to being on study leave in early April, it was both fruitful and rewarding. As Elder Yvonne Rigby stated during the Indigenous Approaches to Holistic Wellness event, while there have been bad things because of the pandemic, there have been good things, too. In fact, one of the most fulfilling experiences I have enjoyed in these Covid times – and which I continue to explore, every day - is beginning to know the traditional territory of the Lekwungen: the Songhees, Esquimalt, and **WSÁNEĆ** people, either on foot and by bicycle, up and down over roads and paths and through woods and water; knowing each small or tall mountain peak, each beach, cove, or bay. As a settler, both to Victoria and from London, Ontario – which is the traditional territory of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendt, Attawandaron and Lenape peoples – I still have much to learn about the land I now call “home.”

Taking time away from working in the library -- away from the committees, the subcommittees, the task groups, the meetings, the emails – has been of enormous benefit to my mental health and wellbeing. I came back to work in October refreshed and rejuvenated and ready for the path ahead in my new reporting role to Ry Moran. No one should have to wait more than the allotted three or six years to take their three or six-month study leave. And hopefully, by the time of my next leave, in 2023 or 2026, it won't be during a pandemic and I will have the opportunity to travel for work and pleasure and connect with other people from around our planet, unmasked, and in close conversation, less than six feet apart.

Thank you for your continued support in my learning and development.

My best,
Christine



New works-in-progress, from L: *Meditation on Obsolescence, var. 1*, replica of Mac computer sourced with local clay from Pkols; and R: *Be Calm, Be Kind, Be Safe*, series of concrete poems inspired by PHO Bonnie Henry.