

William Petrie Graduate Student Library Scholarship 2023
Recipient: Allison Balabuch, Faculty of Education
Award-winning Essay

My experience with libraries during my undergraduate and Masters work was restricted to a one way activity of accessing information. During my doctoral work, I have had the opportunity to interact with UVic's library in new and enriching ways. Since 2021, I have been working with the digital repository *Banda Through Time* (<https://exhibits.library.uvic.ca/spotlight/iaff>) to access information with the purpose of creating new resources and content. Through this interaction, I have not only learned from existing resources hosted by UVic library but have had the opportunity to contribute to the online repository.

Coming out of Dr. Ann Stahl's years of research with a rural community in Ghana, the *Banda Through Time* digital exhibit and repository of cultural heritage resources hosted by UVic library has been developed collaboratively with scholars and Banda-area community members to curate, catalog and make accessible archival photos, audio recordings, videos, and texts. This digital repository is accessible to people worldwide. Through the Banda Heritage Initiative, the community asked that a resource be created to make the information about the area's cultural heritage accessible to young people.

In 2021, as a doctoral student in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, I was hired as a research assistant to use the digital repository to create a textbook for Junior High schools to share the rich repository of cultural heritage with local youth. Throughout 2021 and early 2022, I used the images and information in the digital repository to create a 25 page learning resource. The images and video links in the student resource include the archival

reference number to enable readers of all ages to search it on UVic's library site and read more in depth about each topic. The resource also includes hands-on activities for teachers and learners to understand the information in an embodied way.

In July 2022, I traveled to the Banda area in Ghana to share the draft resource and consult with communities about the content and the learning resource goals. Through this process, I added an additional 30 pages of content using photos from the digital repository and taking new photos that were missing from the archives to meet the communities' needs and input. These additional photographs that I took have now been added to the *Banda Through Time* online resource at UVic. I have used my resource draft with students here in Victoria at Central Middle School which has introduced the UVic library and repository to local grade 8 students. Once my student resource, titled *Learning from our Past*, is completed, it will also be added to the digital repository so that it can be accessed not only in Ghana but worldwide. This resource will be available in English and also in the dominant local Banda language, Nafaanra.

Unlike a one way accessing of information from the library, my experiences with UVic libraries over the past 2 years have been interactive and reciprocal. I have significantly deepened my understanding of archaeology, community research, and Ghanaian heritage and history. I have also had the opportunity to create new resources and contribute new content to this valuable digital repository.