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Offered as an instructive example is the Museum Library at the University of Pennsylvania, affiliated with the sometimes embattled Penn Museum. This “Report from the Field” essay describes the Museum Library’s methods for participating in a rapidly evolving museum’s strategic initiatives and supporting the sincere investment of its dedicated staff in making meaningful changes. I also discuss the Museum Library’s own complicated history and our reflections as we remake the library in the face of local and global challenges.

To cite this article:

Stewart, D. E. B. (2024). “Once Again, From the Beginning:” Re-inventing the Museum Library at the University of Pennsylvania. *International Journal of Librarianship*, 9(2), 17-27. <https://doi.org/10.23974/ijol.2024.vol9.2.363>

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“Once Again, From the Beginning:” Re-inventing the Museum Library at the University of Pennsylvania

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ABSTRACT

As university museums and academic programs struggle with issues of relevancy and harmful legacies, the libraries that are embedded within these institutions must reckon with similar challenging issues because of their own histories, collections content, museum-adjacent programs, and assumed authority in the supported disciplines. Such departmental libraries already occupy uncomfortable positions within complex institutions, often functioning as minor players in the university’s library systems, but only tenuously linked through location or subject matter expertise to the university’s museums and affiliated departments.

Offered as an instructive example is the Museum Library at the University of Pennsylvania, affiliated with the sometimes embattled Penn Museum. This “Report from the Field” essay describes the Museum Library’s methods for participating in a rapidly evolving museum’s strategic initiatives and supporting the sincere investment of its dedicated staff in making meaningful changes. I also discuss the Museum Library’s own complicated history and our reflections as we remake the library in the face of local and global challenges.

Keywords: Departmental library, University museum, Engagement, Cultural change, Decolonization

INTRODUCTION

A library embedded within a university museum occupies multiple identities, each with their own challenges. On the one hand, it serves as a departmental library that supports the university’s curriculum and research of its faculty and students within certain academic disciplines; such academic engagement may be its highest priority, especially if it reports within the university library system rather than directly to the museum administration. Simultaneously, it serves museum staff, external researchers who study the museum holdings, and, where access is permitted, museum visitors. Like museum libraries, its collections relate to the museum’s institutional history and object collections but, because of its role within the university, usually develops with a broader scope and collections depth for subject disciplines that are within the

museum and affiliated academic programs, therefore, a reflection more of the university's ever-evolving programmatic needs rather than the museum's. In addition to staying abreast of academic library trends and subjects within a departmental library's scope, the library staff may remain familiar with museum trends and issues in order to offer exhibits, programs, and outreach that augment the museum's own.

Much like the university museum in which it resides, such a library may have been treated as a jewel in the university's crown, because it supports a distinguished museum and academic programs as a pre-eminent departmental library. Yet, now, some museums and academic disciplines are confronting issues of relevancy and painful legacies of colonial practices, imperialism, and systemic racism. The museum-adjacent, departmental library may have similar issues and legacies, not only "guilty by association" but as consequences of its own history, collections, and assumed authority. By virtue of its complex character at the periphery of the university library system and the university museum, the departmental library may need to forge its own self-critique and different reparative actions than the museum and academic departments with which it is affiliated.

Offered as an instructive example is the Museum Library at the University of Pennsylvania, which serves as Penn's library for anthropology and archaeology. Here I share the library's complicated history, its strategies to regain and maintain relevancy in a rapidly evolving museum, and our reflections as we reinvent the library in face of local and global challenges.

PENN'S MUSEUM LIBRARY FROM THE BEGINNING

The University of Pennsylvania's Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, more commonly called the Penn Museum, was founded on the model of 19th-century encyclopedic museums of world cultures, a strongly colonialist legacy with which the current Penn Museum leadership and community members are grappling (Penn Museum, 2022). The University started overseas archaeological projects in 1887 and later launched ethnographic expeditions that returned with ancient and contemporary objects acquired through excavation, purchase, gifting, or exchanges. Although early projects focused on the Middle East, Egypt, and Peru, by the turn of the 20th century such university-sponsored projects covered central America, West Africa, the Mediterranean basin, most of Asia, and even the Arctic circle. Initially, artifacts were stored in a new administrative building, then on display in what was the university library building, where the Fisher Fine Arts Library is currently housed, until the first wings of the museum building opened on its current location in 1899.

To establish the Museum Library, the newly opened museum received over 4,000 bound volumes and manuscripts from the personal library collection of the University's first "Professor of Archaeology and Linguistics," Daniel Garrison Brinton, upon his death. As a self-taught scholar of American languages and cultures, Brinton collected materials primarily related to ethnography, indigenous American linguistics, folklore, and 19th-century biological sciences, with special interest in colonial manuscripts and documentation of Mesoamerican languages. A prolific and influential scholar in the formative years of anthropology, Brinton's appointment was the first official faculty position for the developing discipline in the United States (Weeks et al., 2002). Yet, his scholarly legacy is disgraced by blatant scientific racism (Baker, 2010).

During its first 40 years, the Museum Library grew unsystematically without any coherent collections strategies, circulation system, nor full-time staffing in the so-called Elkins Library wing. Books were bought by the museum upon the request of museum staff, collected on expeditions sponsored by the University, or donated together with objects. From marginalia and other signs of provenance on items, the early acquisitions for the library have stories themselves, documenting the early years of the Penn Museum, particular interests of museum staff or wealthy supporters, and their social and professional networks. Faculty and museum researchers stockpiled volumes into their offices, but students in specific classes were permitted to use the collection.

By 1942, the museum held over 16,000 volumes scattered throughout the complex, and a library-loving museum director finally appointed a full-time librarian, Cynthia Griffin. During her tenure, Griffin imposed order through cataloging, thoughtful collections development, and a circulation system that allowed trackable loans to staff, faculty, students, and museum members. Although she worked occasionally with university library staff and other departmental librarians on campus, the Museum Library reported primarily to the museum administration during her tenure. The Penn Museum's vast institutional archives document tensions between the Anthropology department and Penn Museum over various matters—both strategic and mundane—throughout most of the 20th century. However, what impact these tensions had on the library and its staff are absent from the Museum Library's surviving records. They instead focus on arguing for resources to keep the library functional, building collections for all relevant subjects regardless of internal politics, and serving students, faculty, staff, and Museum members, whose numbers were carefully tallied and reported monthly. Only in records from the 1960s concerning aspirations for a new building extension does one find clear evidence of the competing interests of the Museum Library's stakeholders, including the University Library, the Penn Museum, various curatorial staff, faculty, and Griffin herself.

The extension, known as the Academic Wing, opened in 1971 with a massive three-story facility for the Museum Library, a museum cafeteria, classrooms, faculty offices and labs for the Anthropology department and other entities, and a large foyer for receiving busloads of school children. A key element of the award-winning design by Romaldo Giurgola was the new library facility at the transition between the Museum's upper galleries and the academic departmental spaces, not coincidentally at the approximate center of the Penn Museum's entire complex. In place of a blocked monumental doorway once intended for galleries that were never built, Giurgola installed a monumental window between the Upper Egypt Gallery and the Museum Library; he later explained that “[t]he teaching functions of the building center around a three-story library which looks into and approaches the scale of the main exhibition hall in the old wing” (Giurgola, 1977). As a former Penn Museum director once explained, making the library stacks visible to the museum-goer signals that the Penn Museum is not static but a dynamic institution housing teaching and research (J. Siggers, personal conversation, December 2016). That Penn Museum staff have at various periods chosen to cover the window with heavy curtains and/or secure the doors between the Academic Wing and galleries reflects what value administrators and museum staff have placed on the visibility of the Museum Library in the intervening decades. Notably, under both recent past and current Penn Museum directors, the curtains remained open except during private events in the galleries, but, since December 2023, the window has been covered in order to protect it from construction activity in the adjacent gallery.

ASSESSING, ENGAGING, AND RE-ASSESSING THE MUSEUM LIBRARY IN THE PRESENT

When I arrived at the Museum Library in December 2016, the library collections had grown to over 145,000 volumes under Cynthia Griffin's successors, Jean Shaw Adelman and then John Weeks. Their collections development policies had aimed at research-level depths in all anthropological subfields and geographic regions that were historic strengths of the Penn Museum's collections, such as Egyptology and Mesoamerica. With such scale and scope, it is heralded as one of the largest departmental libraries for anthropology and archaeology in the United States, appropriately reflecting the University's prestigious academic programs and many fieldwork projects worldwide.

Despite the large collection and monumental facility, low gate counts demonstrated that the Museum Library had lost the interest of audiences by 2016. Penn faculty praise the historic strengths of its collections, but, with services such as Faculty Express providing direct delivery to their departmental offices, they rarely enter the library itself. Poorly lit spaces with piecemeal furniture, some dating from 1971, and almost no working power outlets meant that the library was not suited to the needs of 21st-century students, who could find more attractive and far better-equipped library spaces closer to the central parts of campus. Content specialists on the Penn Museum's curatorial and research staff sought assistance from library staff and retrieved materials from the library's stacks for use in their offices, but very few other museum staff used the Museum Library in any way, even as a service point through which to collect materials borrowed from other library locations or as a quiet retreat from their own offices.

Re-establishing the Museum Library as a departmental library closely engaged with academic programs and students was an obvious first priority for Penn Libraries and, at the time, matched well with the Penn Museum's own aspirations to attract students and classes to its collections and spaces. Taking advantage of resurging interest in object-based learning, the Penn Museum had built a robust Learning Programs department to support K-12 education and, around 2013, initiated an Academic Engagement program that was charged with facilitating class visits and student research at the post-secondary level. The Academic Engagement staff became close partners with the Museum Library; in addition to making referrals for individual consultations and class visits, the departments collaborate regularly on an annual student photography exhibit, New Student Orientation activities, social events, and outreach.

These collaborations have yielded mutual benefits. Most notably, undergraduate majors and graduate students, who use the Penn Museum as their base of studies and work, returned to more regular use of the Museum Library spaces after significant investments in new electrical outlets, Wi-Fi, lighting, and new furniture that was designed in consultation with graduate student volunteers, completed by 2018. Shortly thereafter, with the sponsorship of the Academic Engagement department, the Penn Museum Graduate Advisory Council (PMGAC) was established as "a representative council dedicated to facilitating engagement among graduate

students and promoting their involvement both as collaborative stakeholders within and as advisers to the Penn Museum” (GAC 2024). The Museum Library designs its academic-term programs such as workshops based on direct feedback from PMGAC officers, the Academic Engagement staff, and vocal faculty.

It is of strategic importance for the Museum Library to re-establish its role as a “museum library,” too—that is, as a library that recognizes the museum staff as significant stakeholders and that supports their professional roles in myriad ways. The University follows a [Responsibility Center Management model](#), under which Schools and Centers such as the Penn Museum contribute to the Penn Libraries’ operating costs based on a formula that estimates the benefits received from the library system; in turn, Penn Libraries pays a form of rent and its calculated share of housekeeping and maintenance expenses on behalf of the Museum Library to the Penn Museum as the departmental library’s landlord and, where appropriate, the University’s Facilities and Real Estate Services. When administrators of these organizations change, understandably they bring their own methods for evaluating the value of the Museum Library, and the Museum Library must always be prepared to provide quantifiable data and/or a compelling narrative. But, beyond prudence, neglecting the needs of colleagues and curious museum visitors runs counter to the public-services values that are held dear by the Museum Library’s own three full-time employees, all of whom were drawn to positions in this unique and complex departmental library within a publicly engaged museum.

According to the metrics regularly used to evaluate patron engagement with a library, the Museum Library’s efforts to re-engage Penn Museum staff in the years 2017-2019 had mixed success. Over 50 enthusiastic staff members attended the Museum Library’s open house in July 2017, which highlighted services and a small selection of rare books, but it did not result in any noticeable changes in behavior. When the Penn Museum’s Career Enrichment Committee offered an optional Lunch-and-Learn program about how to use library services and resources in March 2019, fewer than 10 museum staff members decided to attend, including members of the organizing committee. At the lunchtime event, we previewed a web-based research guide specifically designed for Penn Museum staff, revised it according to the participants’ feedback, and later shared it through the Penn Museum’s internal web communications. Despite over 60 views of the guide during its first month, views dropped to near zero in the months to follow. Circulation data for the patron group “Staff” showed no significant change as a consequence of these events.

When the University closed the Penn Museum and all Penn Libraries locations because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in mid-March 2020, momentum changed rather than stopped. Penn Museum staff pivoted to work on expanding virtual programs for museum audiences and improving object records in its collections database. Simultaneously, Museum Library staff used their professional contacts, personal libraries, new digital content, and other quickly implemented services to help faculty, students, and staff researchers who rely on archaeological, art historical, and anthropological scholarship that existed mostly in print formats. In June 2020, Museum Library became one of three Penn Libraries’ locations to restore services around its print collections; following public health guidance and working together with Penn Museum staff on safety protocols that were approved by the University, one Museum Library staff member worked on-site each day in order to make scans and retrieve materials, which were transported to Penn’s main library, Van Pelt-Dietrich Library, for shipping to patrons or interlibrary loan. Periodically throughout 2020 and 2021, under the guidance of the Center for Disease Control, city agencies,

and University officials, the Penn Museum reopened to visitors following strict protocols, but the Museum Library remained closed to all patrons until August 2021. During times of crisis, working in partnership and communicating across reporting lines can be key to organizational resilience and recovery. In this case, Penn Museum leadership included the Museum Library's Head in monthly, virtual meetings with its museum departmental managers and as a stakeholder in working groups that planned the reopening of different museum spaces and resumption of services to different audiences. Sharing information and planning together benefitted both organizations.

The synergy continued into the fall of 2022, when Penn Museum leadership and departmental managers made concerted efforts to re-engage staff who were returning to campus and to orient new staff. A presentation at the Penn Museum's monthly All-Staff Meeting demonstrated how to request materials for convenient pickup through the Museum Library Circulation desk, how to activate free access to major newspapers through institutional subscriptions, and how to find other popular resources. As part of on-campus onboarding, new staff participated in a special tour of the Museum Library. Visitor Services, Conservation, and Learning Programs departments coordinated customized tours for their own teams, during which the Museum Library highlighted resources that would be of particular value to their department. Unlike earlier efforts, these recent sessions have made a difference in how Penn Museum staff use Penn Libraries' resources overall: requests from other library locations and interlibrary loans by the patron group "Staff" delivered through the Museum Library Circulation desk are higher than in the past 5 years; the updated [web-based guide](#) for Penn Museum staff now receives several views each month; according to what is recorded by library staff through an internal reporting system set up only in 2019, the number of interactions with Penn Museum staff increased noticeably; and library staff have the impression that more individual museum staff members are visiting the library spaces than before (Stewart, 2024). To our minds, these requests and their impacts represent a significant cultural shift acknowledging the value of the Museum Library to the Penn Museum staff.

There are still areas where engaging museum staff with Museum Library's curated resources needs further evaluation. In efforts to support professional museum staff as well as research interests of students and faculty, Penn Libraries adds over 100 monographs annually and subscribes to more than 170 journals on museum studies and related topics, the majority selected and managed by the Head of the Museum Library as subject bibliographer. Many of these museological acquisitions are anthologies of essays or conference proceedings rather than single-authored, long-form monographs. As the Museum Library stacks are near capacity, requiring regular transfers to Penn Libraries' off-site repository, we have begun informal conversations with museum staff readers about their preferences for print or e-books to use alongside what usage data is available.

Conversations with staff who are interested in museum trends revealed different behaviors for discovery and usage than we expected. Individuals with whom we spoke explained that, while they use the library catalog to search for authors or specific publications that have been highlighted in listservs, blogs, and conference talks, rarely did they use keyword searches or other search strategies in Penn Libraries' platforms in order to explore similar content, even for topics such as decolonization where the literature is rapidly expanding. Having heard their concerns about missing new publications in museum studies, the Museum Library added persistent links to searches for topics constructed within the library catalog, sorted by publication date, to the staff

guide, and a new section of the guide points to titles that Joy Davis, book review editor for the journal *Museum Management and Curatorship*, highlights in her annual list.

Notably, some museum staff share that they are dubious about the timeliness or effectiveness of learning about new trends within their specialization from publications collected by libraries; instead, they report that they rely on their professional networks, visits to other museums, conferences, trade shows, and other means that would not be possible for the Museum Library to provide. What they found valuable through the Museum Library's consultations or outreach efforts was information about Penn Libraries' other resources related to their professional roles; examples included the Penn Libraries' portable 3-D scanners that could be borrowed for experimentation, building codes and other standards on web-based guides maintained by the Engineering and Fine Arts librarians, tools for market research, and access to major newspapers and popular magazines.

A short survey about the library, distributed through the Penn Museum's internal web in October 2023, gleaned additional insights. The survey received only 14 responses (under 10% of the full-time museum staff), 10 of whom identified themselves as people who visit the library almost daily, weekly, or monthly. Not surprisingly, the respondents rated the "convenience of the Museum Library" as the most important in comparison with other library services and features. Access to major newspapers, library materials related to their professional roles, and library materials "of other interest" (explained in the survey text as resources for continuing education, personal or family entertainment, or wellness) rated highly as well. Most survey respondents rated access to special technologies, quiet workspaces, reservable meeting rooms, and streaming video or audio as relatively unimportant to them; yet, in informal conversations with infrequent library users among the museum staff, these were the services that were specifically mentioned as useful.

For staff in at least two departments within the Penn Museum (Membership department and the recently renamed department of Learning & Public Engagement), the Museum Library's contributions to Penn Museum's success include the library's willingness to engage with Penn Museum Members and visitors. The Head of the Museum Library has been a featured speaker for the Penn Museum's "Coffee with a Keeper" programs in 2019 and again virtually in August 2020, and the Museum Library offered a special Members-Only tour of its rare-book exhibit in February 2023—all of which sold-out. The apparent success of these programs demonstrates that, for museum visitors, the Museum Library and its assets are viewed as a continuation of the Penn Museum, regardless of the library's reporting structure. Admittedly, Penn Libraries and Penn Museum's own carefully branded identities present a challenge for effectively branding the Museum Library, coordinating outreach, and participating as a stakeholder in conversations around audiences. Yet the lack of a clear public identity as a "Penn Libraries' library" or a "Penn Museum department" is useful in attracting different audiences who might engage with the Museum Library, including Penn students and museum staff.

Temporary book displays to supplement special museum programs have been simple ways to bridge divides between Penn Libraries' and Penn Museum's core audiences. To give a few examples: when the Penn Museum's Learning Programs staff offered hands-on creative activities for children and their families as part of a new "Summer Wonders" program, the Museum Library set up a table-top display with a few books about the cultures featured in these family-oriented activities. A selection of books on medical anthropology and ancient medicine was prepared for a special event promoting the Penn Museum to medical staff at the local hospital in February 2024. During the March 2024 PHS Philadelphia Flower Show, where the Penn Museum had installed a

preview display to highlight its special exhibition, “Ancient Food and Flavor,” the Museum Library set up another temporary display featuring books on archaeobotany, together with informational handouts. Such book selections entice students, museum staff, and museum visitors to explore topics that have already engaged their interests elsewhere in the Penn Museum.

Seasonal fluctuations can create windows of opportunity for a museum-adjacent departmental library to engage with new audiences. Summers at the Museum Library are radically different from the academic terms, because Penn faculty and students in anthropology and archaeology disappear from campus in order to focus on fieldwork, and the affiliated departments offer only a couple of introductory classes without research assignments during the brief, intensive summer sessions. Therefore, the Museum Library is able to focus more directly on the needs of Penn Museum visitors but also provide special tours, career talks, and sessions aimed at demystifying academic libraries to summer interns and the Penn Museum’s summer camp counselors.

Before the pandemic, the Museum Library initiated its own programming for public audiences as well. According to staff feedback and the evidence of audience sizes, the most successful of the library’s public programs were monthly pop-up exhibits that replaced a popular weekly program offered by the Penn Museum Archives but suspended because of construction. The library’s programs include library staff gently turning pages in carefully selected rare books while a “guest curator” from the Penn Museum staff, faculty members, and graduate students offer an informal talk related to the books. Although only 1 hour-long programs offered mid-afternoon on the last Friday of the month, they regularly brought in small audiences, ranging in size from 4 to 30 people, including museum visitors, students, faculty, and museum staff. The guest curators and I did not eschew topics such as colonialism, imperialism, systemic racism, provenance, and repatriation but instead positioned the books and their own provenance as primary sources through which these topics can be traced for purposes of deeper reflection and accountability. Because Penn Libraries has added greater bureaucratic oversight of pop-up exhibits in the intervening years and because Museum Library’s operations have been slow to return to normal since March 2020, we have yet to resume these popular programs. However, there is interest from potential guest curators and leadership of both organizations because of the ways in which these programs augment the museum’s own offerings around objects, promote library resources’ availability to the wider community, and provide opportunities to unveil the ways in which we are critically examining scholarship, collections, and institutional history in order to redress mistakes of the past and move forward on greater inclusivity and accountability.

LOOKING AHEAD TO NEW BEGINNINGS

During strategic planning, organizational leaders can reflect deeply on where they have been, where they are, and where they wish to go through conversations with staff and stakeholders. Although not reporting to the Penn Museum’s administration, it nonetheless behooves the Museum Library to situate itself within the Penn Museum’s strategic vision and priorities to ensure alignment with its host institution’s goals, even as it continues to be guided by the Penn Libraries’ strategic plan already in progress. Both organizations’ strategic plans will likely readjust somewhat to the University’s new strategic framework, “In Principle and Practice: Penn’s Focus on the Future,” carrying strong statements around diversity, equity, inclusivity, interdisciplinary research, ethics, responsibilities to the local community, and global impact of a powerful research university.

Yet many of these themes were already centered within the Penn Libraries and Penn Museum's own reaffirmed values and resulting strategic plans.

At the time of this writing, the Penn Museum has launched strategic-plan working groups to develop short and long-term goals around ten priority areas, and the Museum Library has the potential to contribute to each priority area. Priorities such as cultural heritage, research support, and interpretation should already be well-supported by the library's strong collections and established services; yet the Museum Library must remain watchful for areas where services might evolve to meet emerging needs. Priorities around technologies, environment, and collections storage reflect concerns shared between both the Penn Libraries and Penn Museum, and, as the Penn Libraries' liaison to the Penn Museum, the Head's role includes identifying opportunities for collaboration or partnership. Currently, the Penn Libraries and Penn Museum staff are evaluating a recent pilot project that digitized a selection of the Penn Museum's out-of-print publications and that has stimulated conversations between the two organizations around the future of publishing and digital strategies. As the Penn Museum reconsiders its content creation and changes its relationships with its audiences, the Museum Library should find ways to bridge the disconnect between being an academic library with a focus on students and faculty and being a Museum Library within an institution that has already begun co-curating and co-programming with community members. Two other priority areas focus on resources for staff and museological trends; as highlighted above, these are among the Museum Library's own strategic priorities for deepening engagement with museum staff, and they will need continued attention.

Even before the strategic visioning process, the Penn Museum staff, Penn's Anthropology department, student groups, stakeholders in indigenous communities, and residents of Philadelphia were discussing long-standing practices and narratives that are inherently and sometimes blatantly colonialist, nationalistic, racist, and exclusionary within the Penn Museum, its affiliated academic disciplines, and campus culture. In recent decades, many museums have started reparative work, engaged with willing community members as frank critics and partners, confronted harmful ideologies, dismantled some practices, and implemented significant changes, acknowledging that traditional museological practices reinforce colonizing authority and knowledge production. Penn Museum staff have been invested in similar work for years, even decades, and the strategic visioning process brought greater attention to these issues and reparative actions (Penn Museum, 2022).

Together with the growing literature offering theoretical perspectives and case studies by library colleagues in Canada, Europe, and Australia around "decolonizing" academic libraries (for literature review, see Crilly, 2023), these conversations have challenged the Museum Library to be reflective and reflexive about its own positionality. Although the prestige of a departmental library rests on the scale and scope of its collections, the vast majority of the Museum Library collections are works of American and western European scholarship from the 19th century to the present, including works that are racist and that contributed to harm and violence in the past and into the present. How does a library so deeply reflective of settler-colonialism and historic racism acknowledge its culpability and take reparative action?

Diversifying collections has been a goal of the Museum Library for over a decade. Because stacks are near full capacity, staff have been transferring redundant, outdated, or problematic materials to Penn Libraries' off-site repository, where items can still be requested for use by a patron. By creating stacks space for new acquisitions, we are using this opportunity to de-center predominantly white, American and Eurocentric narratives about cultures worldwide. Revised

collections development strategies throughout Penn Libraries seek to acquire more scholarship and creative works from Central and South America, Africa, Europe, Asia, and Oceania for the Museum Library and other collections on campus, and, admittedly, the irony of expanding acquisitive behaviors to combat colonialism is not lost on us.

There is concern that purging problematic materials from the collections potentially discourages interrogation and accountability. Rather than hide the problematic legacies of our affiliated disciplines or the Penn Museum, the Museum Library's recent and upcoming programs and exhibits invite community advisors, scholars, and students to expose and critique the scholarly legacies of individuals like Brinton. For example, the "Decolonizing Ourselves" event, which was co-sponsored with the graduate students in 2023, welcomed students, librarians, faculty, and staff to gather in the Museum Library and discuss in what ways library collections contribute to the production of knowledge and authority, and the event will be repeated this year. Additionally, library staff have been voluntarily participating in anti-racism trainings led by community members, anti-bias trainings led by human resources staff, safe space trainings led by Penn's LGBT Center, and other opportunities to listen, learn, reflect, and participate in forging better futures through work at the Museum Library and in our communities.

The Museum Library's reflections and practices of "decolonizing" have only recently begun, but increased engagement and responsiveness to community members, students, and the Penn Museum staff are foundational to such work. Grappling with messy institutional legacies and sometimes finding, then dismantling unacknowledged biases that are at odds with one's own values are not easy, but we move closest to our values as librarians, educators, and colleagues when we embrace the discomfort, evaluate and re-evaluate ourselves, acknowledge mistakes, speak constructively, listen without defense, explore nuances, and seek meaningful changes. As libraries embedded with museums and academic departments participating in this work, through our own deep reflections and experiences at the strange junctures in which we work, we might lead other academic libraries by our example.

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