

Collaboration between an Academic Library and Campus Partners to Connect with Military and Veteran Students

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Working with the Duquesne University School of Nursing and Office of Military and Veteran Students, Duquesne's Gumberg Library used grant funds to purchase a collection of resources that address the social, economic, physical, and psychological issues veterans face in the transition to civilian and student life. The library collaborated with campus partners to select materials that fit the needs of students and faculty, and purchased approximately 170 new books, ebooks, DVDs, and streaming videos. As a result of the project, the library also increased programming and outreach to veteran students on campus. This article discusses the methods used to select materials, marketing efforts to promote the new collection, usage to date, and the library's plans to further enhance veteran student engagement with both the library and the university.

Introduction

Since the passing of the Post-9/11 GI Bill in 2008, a growing number of veterans have been entering higher education. According to the literature, "two million veterans could take advantage of this benefit" (Sojdehei, 2013, p. 537). To address the unique needs of this population, the Gumberg Library at Duquesne University partnered with the School of Nursing and the Office of Military and Veteran Students (OMVS). The goal of this project was to strengthen the library's collection of resources needed for veteran and military students.

Duquesne is a private Catholic university located in Pittsburgh, PA, with total enrollment in the spring 2016 semester of 9,019 students, including 300 veterans or currently serving military service members (3.3% of total enrollment) (Kori Szelong, personal communication, July 11, 2016). The university has made a concerted effort in recent years to recruit more military and veteran students and offers a full range of services, many of which are led by the OMVS. The OMVS assists with benefits, offers programming, and provides a high level of support to military

and veteran students. In addition, the School of Nursing offers the Veterans to Bachelors of Science in Nursing (VBSN) program, which is funded through a 2014 Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) grant¹ to recruit and support veterans transitioning from the military into nursing careers. The School of Nursing allocated funds from its HRSA grant to Gumberg Library to support purchasing a collection of resources that address the social, economic, physical, and psychological issues veterans face in the transition to civilian and student life. The library used grant funds to purchase approximately 170 new books, ebooks, DVDs, and streaming videos. It also used the project as a catalyst for increased programming and outreach to veteran students on campus.

It's Not All about PTSD

From the beginning of the project, the library worked to ensure the participation of university community members and used varied methods to solicit suggestions, including emailing faculty, a web-based suggestion form (duq.libsurveys.com/loader.php?id=a6b2b98962c36118945c56d6b96af3b6), and direct contact from librarian liaisons to selected faculty in the history and political science departments as well as the schools of health sciences, nursing, and pharmacy. The library also enlisted the help of key stakeholders to deliver the message to faculty and students, including the School of Nursing Associate Dean and the Director of the OMVS. In order to highlight existing collection resources, the library created a research guide about veterans' issues (guides.library.duq.edu/resourcesforveterans). This guide also gave the library another platform to access the suggestion form. As the project gained momentum, others who were interested in veteran students began to send suggestions, including faculty, graduate students, and staff from the English and psychology departments as well as veterans working in faculty and staff positions in other university units. In order to physically and electronically demarcate print purchases, the library purchased bookplates for the project and recorded the grant name in a MARC record field. Due to Duquesne's large population of online nursing students (both veteran and nonveteran), the library purchased electronic resources whenever possible.

Overall, we received 87 requests. Of those, the library owned or had already ordered 39 titles. After analyzing the themes in the requests received, we found that many of the titles were not typical of what might be expected: Staff and faculty in the OMVS and the School of Nursing are interested in spiritual wounds and moral injury. Moral injury is not to be confused with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD): "the fundamental distinction between [the two] is in the core emotion: moral injury is based in *shame* and *guilt* whereas PTSD is rooted in an overwhelming experience of *fear*" (Antal & Winings, 2015, p. 384; emphasis theirs). Another significant theme in requests was navigating the post-deployment transition, with special emphasis on books for helping families adjust. Other themes focused on building nursing leaders, women veterans, veterans in higher education, and healing physical and emotional wounds. Personal narratives by medics, nurses, and other health personnel who were deployed overseas or who work with returning veterans were also recommended. Once these broad themes were noted, they were used to discover further titles, including additional titles written by requested authors. We searched WorldCat using the Library of Congress subject headings for the requested titles to find additional works with the same headings and also searched popular booksellers' sites using subject keywords (e.g., "Walter Reed" for works about injured veterans being treated at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center).

Library Selections

Beyond the recommendations received, the library primarily purchased resources focused on the needs of veterans of the recent Iraq and Afghanistan wars, since the VBSN grant concentrates on the veterans most likely to use the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. The library did, however, select a limited number of materials that focused on veterans of earlier wars and highlighted relevant issues to them, such as transitioning home and coping with trauma

and/or injury. Since the project was aimed at serving nursing students, materials about nursing care for veterans were also prioritized. To identify possible purchases, the library first consulted Doody's Review Service (www.doody.com/DEJ), which focuses on health sciences materials. Doody's was searched for titles that either specifically mentioned veterans or issues like amputation, burns, disability, PTSD, traumatic brain injury, and military sexual trauma. The library also used the spotlight lists and reviews in Yankee Book Peddler's GOBI (Global Online Bibliographic Information) to find additional titles (gobi3.com). Other methods included searching *Library Journal*, *Choice*, and other book reviews (which were also used for vetting books), and reading consumer reviews on sites including Goodreads, Internet Movie Database, and various booksellers' sites like Powell's Books and Amazon.

Additionally, we looked to previous events sponsored by the OMVS to select titles. In 2015, the OMVS sponsored a visit by leading PTSD and moral injury expert, Dr. Edward Tick, and held a public screening of the documentary *Project 22*, which highlights veteran suicide. Through the grant, Gumberg purchased Dr. Tick's books, *Project 22*, and additional titles on veteran suicide, including *Veteran Suicide: A Public Health Imperative*, edited by Robert M. Bossarte. While the original request form has been removed from the Web now that the grant funds are spent, the library continues to solicit recommendations for veterans' resources through its "Suggest a Purchase" form.

"To Understand and be Understood"

We recognize that understanding veterans' lived experiences is critical to students who will be caring for veterans, so the library emphasized collecting fiction and memoirs focused on war and its aftermath. These works also benefit veteran students: As author and Iraq War veteran Kevin Powers has said, "Every time I open a book or sit down at my desk, I'm hoping for confirmation that it is possible to understand and be understood by my fellow human beings" (Slater, 2014, p. 49). National Book Award Winner *Redeployment* by Phil Klay was an obvious first selection; subsequent purchases were works written by other well-regarded veteran authors and poets. Booksellers and review sites became powerful tools to identify more books by veterans or about veteran experiences. In particular, the library selected works by those whose voices are not heard as often, including women, people of color, and LGBTQ members of the military. To further encourage understanding of other viewpoints, the library selected books focused on those in occupied lands, including Hassan Blasim's *The Corpse Exhibition*, Anthony Shadid's *Night Draws Near: Iraq's People in the Shadow of America's War*, and Joydeep Roy-Bhattacharya's *The Watch*.

Considering the importance of literature produced a new avenue of collaboration as well. After reading a profile of student veteran creative writing group, the DU Dog Tags, in the Duquesne student newspaper (Culpepper, n.d.), the library contacted the group's founder to obtain book recommendations; she provided an extensive list of additional fiction and nonfiction works and became an ally in promoting the collection.

Videos

While Gumberg subscribes to the streaming video site Ambrose and several sections of the *Journal of Visualized Experiments*, individual streaming videos had not been purchased prior to this project. Taking into account that the one-time allocation of funds could not cover platform fees, we determined that two vendors were appropriate, New Day Films and Films on Demand. In order to publicize the newly purchased videos as well as the library's other streaming resources, we created a new Streaming Video research guide (guides.library.duq.edu/streaming) and linked it to the Veterans' Resources guide. The selected vendors allow video use in courses, and so we included instructions for embedding videos into course pages in the Blackboard learning management system (guides.library.duq.edu/c.php?g=232644&p=3486399). As some vendors do not carry streaming videos, we purchased

DVDs as well. DVDs meet the needs of instructors intending to show videos in class, as well as students who do not have reliable internet access off-campus. Where possible, the library purchased streaming rights/DVD combinations to accommodate all users.

Promotion

Perhaps the most important aspect of the project is to ensure the materials are used. To that end, we have marketed the collection through various means. The Outreach Librarian featured the project in the library blog (Gumberg Library, 2016) and newsletter, while the library's project partners at VBSN and the OMVS alerted Duquesne's veteran community to the research guide and collection via email and social media. The OMVS added a blurb about the library and a link to the guide on its Support Services Web page (duq.edu/admissions-and-aid/military-and-veterans/support-services). Additionally, the library created a display for the new collection in one of the highest traffic areas of the library, which featured many of the purchased books and DVDs as well as lists highlighting selected electronic books and streaming videos. The library also publicized the new collection to other university stakeholders, and the *Duquesne University Times* (2016) featured it in an article for the entire Duquesne community.

Results to Date

Due to the strong campus support from faculty and staff for this project, we were eager to see how the purchases have been used. Less than one year later, a little over 34% of the print resources purchased for this project have been checked out at least once. The most used physical purchase has been the documentary *Project 22*, which has been checked out five times (Table 1). Another film, *Lioness*, has been placed on course reserve multiple times by faculty members unrelated to the project. Sixty-four percent of the streaming videos have been viewed more than once; the highest, a series about job interviewing for people with disabilities, has been viewed six times. However, four of the streaming videos have not been viewed at all. The electronic books were used at a slightly lower rate than print (29%). While the majority of the ebooks were used three times or less, two were accessed a particularly significant amount (Table 2). *Sand Queen*, a novel about a woman soldier in Iraq, has been accessed 14 times while *The Body Keeps the Score*, a nonfiction work about trauma, has been retrieved 31 times. These numbers suggest that while further promotion of the entire collection is needed, the library should continue to purchase titles that align with the themes requested during this project, as those titles will be used.

Table 1

Print Books & DVDs Purchased for Project - Top Titles from January 2016-December 2016

Title	Author	Total Checkouts
Project 22 [DVD]	Egbert, Daniel J.; King, Doc	5
Adaptive disclosure: A new treatment for military trauma, loss, and moral injury	Litz, Brett T.	3
Afterwar: Healing the moral wounds of our soldiers	Sherman, Nancy	2
The practice of dream healing: Bringing ancient Greek mysteries into modern medicine	Tick, Edward	2
Redeployment	Klay, Phil	2
The untold war: Inside the hearts, minds, and souls of our soldiers	Sherman, Nancy	2

Table 2

Electronic Books Purchased for Project: Top Titles from January 2016-December 2016

Title	Author	Total Title Requests
The body keeps the score: Brain, mind, and body in the healing of trauma	Van der Kolk, Bessel A.	31
Sand queen	Benedict, Helen	14
Trauma and recovery: The aftermath of violence--From domestic abuse to political terror	Herman, Judith L.	3
Between flesh and steel: A history of military medicine from the Middle Ages to the war in Afghanistan	Gabriel, Richard A.	3
Run, don't walk: The curious and chaotic life inside Walter Reed Army Medical Center	Levine, Adele	3
Soul repair: Recovering from moral injury after war	Brock, Rita Nakashima; Lettini, Gabriella	3

Moving Forward

Gumberg Library plans to continue the work begun by this project. In fall 2016, it hosted events surrounding *FUBAR*, a limited edition book of poems by Pew fellow and Duquesne alum J.C. Todd, with art by MaryAnn L. Miller. The cover of each copy is made from fallen military members' uniforms. The library simultaneously hosted Combat Paper NJ for a workshop that allowed members of the Duquesne community to make their own paper from military uniforms. The University Archives has partnered with the OMVS to record and preserve the oral histories of Duquesne's veterans. The library has further collaborated with the DU Dog Tags: When the director of the OMVS noted that the Dog Tags did not have enough notebooks, the library successfully appealed

to a vendor to donate them. Additionally, stakeholders from the library, VBSN, Dog Tags, and OMVS are working together to launch a veterans' book group to begin in fall 2017.

Discussion

Selecting and ordering the materials for this project was completed in a relatively short (four-month) time span. Had we had more time, we would have surveyed students, faculty, and staff about what they felt was needed in the collection in order to obtain a broader range of suggestions. While we did collect input from a variety of stakeholders, we received a much smaller number of recommendations from students than we did from faculty. For those undertaking a similar project, we recommend promoting it as much as possible while purchases are ongoing as well as after funds have been spent. We also recommend documenting every aspect of the project, including searches, requests, and what was purchased. For anything not purchased, the reasoning should be recorded. We did not purchase several titles due to high prices and a few others that were out-of-print.

The most important factor throughout the project was the collaboration inside and outside the library. This project required significant coordination between the library and the School of Nursing, including development of extraordinary accounting processes. Prior to beginning the project, the library held several meetings with representatives from the School of Nursing, including the principal investigator of the VBSN grant, and the School of Nursing's Associate Dean for Research, Budget Manager, and Research Administrative Assistant. The library also held several internal meetings. These meetings established not only which types of purchases the library would concentrate on (i.e. single-time purchases) but also how the funds would be tracked and spent, which was complicated due to the inter-departmental nature of the project. Inside the library, the processes required collaboration with technical services, including acquisitions, cataloging, and electronic resources as well as the systems, marketing, and reference departments of the library. While the materials selected were chosen specifically for veteran students and the faculty and administrators supporting them, the library encourages campus-wide use of the resources. The library now views the work that the OMVS and School of Nursing do as a guideline for future collecting. This grant became an opportunity not only for the library to collaborate with both the OMVS and the School of Nursing, but also for the library to help support the goals of both campus institutions. The dialogue begun between the School of Nursing, OMVS, and Gumberg Library made this project a success and created a foundation the library continues to build upon. The library can, and should, be a part of larger educational and service efforts aimed at veterans and military students. Supporting students needs to be a holistic, campus-wide effort, and the library can be a key player in that effort. Ultimately, "we collect library material so that we can share it. The value of a collection comes from the [user's] interaction with it: the insights, questions, connections, and understanding it generates" (Brown, 2015, p. 485). As we move forward, we plan to continue to reach out to the student veteran community in order to ensure that the library is meeting their needs. The library can play an important role in helping students succeed academically, but it can help with engagement as well.

Notes

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