Title of Project: Representations of the public library in Canadian mass media

Undergraduate Students: 2 MIT students will each be hired for 2 terms at $1,250 per term

Required Skills: excellent communication skills, ability to work in a team environment, organizational skills; completion of either MIT3000 Designing and Critiquing Research Methods or MIT2125 Research Methods for the Digital Age.

Suggested Skills: completion of one or more media production courses or equivalent experience.

Term of Employment: September – December 2020; January- April 2021

FIMS Investigators:

Pamela McKenzie
Erin Isings

Description of Project

North American public libraries have long agreed on a set of high-level values and associated purposes. However, these values do not always align; for example, the value of transmitting (implicitly high) culture to future generations conflicts with the value of democratizing collections and opening spaces to a more diverse public. Different stakeholders (e.g., library staff versus library users) may emphasize different values and different purposes for library spaces, collections, programs, and services, which can result in tension, conflict, or social exclusion. In an environment where public libraries are increasingly called on to justify their value in economic terms, it is crucial to pay attention to the goals and purposes emphasized not just by library users, but by a variety of stakeholders, including the mass media.

Objective: This project will investigate the representation of public library values in Canadian mass media

Methodology: In Fall 2020 the team will identify a body of Canadian media articles about public libraries and analyze the representations of the public library for their underlying value statements and patterns over time. In Winter 2021, the team members will work together to create a small-scale multimedia communication plan to disseminate the study findings, e.g., infographics or social media-shareable videos.
Support and development of Undergraduate Student Fellows

Students will contribute to all aspects of the project, from design through to scholarly and public dissemination.

In Term 1, they will have an opportunity to build on what they have learned in their Research Methods course. They will gain valuable research experience and skills in study design, sampling, and thematic analysis.

In Term 2 they will gain experience in research creation, which is an increasingly important application of communications expertise in scholarly communities. The project will provide students with an opportunity to apply the technical and creative production principles and the audio, visual, and digital skills they have gained in MIT 1070 First year Foundations in Media Production or in 2000 or 3000-level production courses (e.g., MIT 2180 Multimedia journalism: an introduction; MIT 2570 Introduction to digital imaging and website design; MIT 2600 Introduction to Graphic design; MIT 2601 Introduction to video theory and production; MIT 3430 Making: theory and practice, MIT 3470 Mobile journalism; or MIT 3663 Podcasting and audio journalism)