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SEF Final Narrative

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World History of Design Project

This semester I was given the opportunity to work with Professor Rebecca Houze from the Department of Art and Design at Northern Illinois University. Through this project, I was able to gain valuable experience in the field of Art History and learn about the details of a book publication. The impact of this program on my academic experience this year has been profound. Through this narrative, I will summarize my project and reflect on the impact it had on me.

The project which I was given the opportunity to assist in was Professor Houze's collaboration with the late Dr. Victor Margolin on the third and fourth volumes of the *World History of Design*. These books presented a chronological and comprehensive history of world design. Specifically, I was able to see many of the aspects of putting together the third volume. Prior to his passing, Dr. Margolin had written several chapters for this volume, mainly focused on design from the United States. The rest of the volume will be written by collaborators around the world with expertise on the countries which will be represented in this volume. Over the years, Dr. Margolin had collected many sources, including newspaper clippings, articles, brochures, and more, on world design and had created many files full of these sources. One of my main objectives was to work with these sources and scan them into an online database which could then be shared with the collaborators.

After the closing of the university campus and transition to online learning due to Covid-19, our objectives had to be adapted. As a commuter, I often took the files home to scan and

upload, and I had taken many files home to work on over spring break. Because of this, I still had scanning work that I could accomplish, but because of the closing of campus, obtaining more of these files was no longer achievable. After the remaining files were scanned and uploaded, I moved on to creating citation lists, based on country, of the sources in the online database so that the chapter authors could see what sources were available to them. At the close of the project, this was the task that I was working on.

Even though our semester was altered in a way we could never have expected, I believe that we were still able to accomplish many of our original objectives. Most of the files that we began with have been scanned and uploaded to the database. As a commuter, I really appreciated the ability to take the files home with me and work on them there, and I believe this was effective for the outcome. While I wish that I had the opportunity to do more, the closing of campus hindered our ability to continue working on that objective. However, the collaborating authors now have access to many of sources which Dr. Margolin had collected over his many years as a design expert. Those sources, some of which were decades old, are now preserved digitally. I was also able to work on several source lists so that the authors can navigate the database more effectively. Although I hoped that I would have been able to dedicate more hours to this last portion of the project, there were several unforeseen factors that affected the last few weeks of the semester.

The opportunity to work on this project with Professor Houze has affected me positively in so many ways. As a transfer student, I felt intimidated by the new community I was joining, and I had just experienced several personal hardships that made it very difficult to immerse myself. When Professor Houze extended this opportunity to me, my whole experience changed. I was eager to return for the spring semester and begin this project. She gave me the opportunity to

cultivate a relationship with faculty in my field of study, which is one of the most beneficial aspects of attending a university. In addition, I had yet to gain real life experience in the field of Art History, and as I am in nearing the end of my college experience, it has been incredibly helpful. I believe that it can never be to your detriment to learn about new things, and Professor Houze took the time to really teach me and further my interest in the field. After this experience, I feel very confident to enter my final year of undergraduate study. Working on this program also gave me a feeling of connectedness to the university after the pandemic required us to stay home. Weekly video meetings with Professor Houze helped me to stay on track not only with the project, but also with my classes.

Though the semester did not end the way anyone hoped it would have, my experience in this program through the Office of Student Engagement and Learning was incredibly valuable. In assisting faculty within my field of study, I have gained real-life experience, which will continue to benefit me in the future.