

Embedding Library & Archives Research Skills into the Undergraduate Experience:

Case Study in Student, Instructor, and Librarian Collaboration

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Abstract:

For many students, the opportunity to engage in meaningful original research under the tutelage of an academic supervisor is relegated to those pursuing graduate studies. Although many undergraduate students write honours theses, much of what appears in those papers is learned through access to their library's core collections, with students accessing their library's monograph and journal literature. What is often overlooked, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels, is the richness of their own institution's special collections and archives. As the authors of this paper argue, many instructors (and students) are unaware of the depth of their home institution's archives and special collections. This article presents a case study of a recent student-research collaboration conducted by an academic Librarian and an instructor in the Medieval Studies Program at St. Jerome's University at the University of Waterloo, in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.

1. Introduction

St. Jerome's University is a liberal arts Catholic University that is federated with the University of Waterloo, located in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. The University of Waterloo is well known in its region for its innovative cooperative education programs and its institutional strength in the STEM fields. Recently, the Faculty of Arts added an Arts Co-op program to provide opportunities for Arts majors to gain experience in fields related to their studies. Shortly after joining the St. Jerome's Library as Associate Librarian, one of the authors of this paper, Dr. Michelle Atkin, began to investigate the possibility of creating a meaningful co-operative education placement for a student in the Arts co-operative education program. Melissa Gatti was the St. Jerome's Library's inaugural *Library & Archives Co-op Assistant* in the winter of 2023. During her time as the Library Co-op student, Gatti was instrumental in helping the library develop student-focused workshops, emphasizing student success and wellness, and assisting with several archival projects. Through her archival work, Gatti was introduced to one of the library's unique collections – an uncatalogued treasure trove of religious relics. Recognizing the uniqueness of this collection, Atkin reached out to one of her paper co-authors, her colleague in Medieval Studies, Dr. Steven Bednarski, to explore

potential student research opportunities. These discussions resulted in a collaborative effort between the Library and the Medieval Studies Program from which Gatti was able to complete a successful undergraduate Independent Study (HIST 491). In this paper, Atkin, Bednarski, and Gatti provide a case study and accompanying methodology to support student, instructor, and librarian collaboration. Our paper begins with a background into the University of Waterloo's co-operative education program and provides an outline of some of the pedagogical goals of cooperative education as a whole. Next, it provides reflections on co-operative and experiential learning, written from a student, faculty, and library perspective. These reflections offer insights into how departmental faculty members and academic librarians can collaborate to enrich the student experience and serve as a potential model for other institutions looking to incorporate archival and special collections into their overall curriculum design and knowledge integration.

2. University of Waterloo's Co-operative Education Program

What began as a relatively small cohort of 74 engineering students in 1957 (Associate Provost, Co-operative and Experiential Education, University of Waterloo, 2025), has grown into the world's largest co-operative education program of its kind, with over [25,000](#) students enrolled in 120 accredited programs across six of the university's faculties ([University of Waterloo, 2025](#)).

Advantages of Co-op

For many students, the decision to attend the University of Waterloo is based on their ability to take advantage of its Co-operative Education programs. Students enrolled in co-op can gain up to two years of paid work experience while completing their degree. By folding work terms in between study terms, students can apply the skills they are learning in the classroom to their work-life and explore the potential career paths available to them ([University of Waterloo, Co-Operative Education, 2025](#)). As students navigate their co-op experience, they can tap into coaching support from their co-op advisor as well as access resume writing and interview preparation supports through the [Centre for Career Development](#) and the [Co-operative Education Office](#).

Hiring Process

The University of Waterloo provides support for prospective employers throughout the hiring process. Students applying for co-op positions can utilize the WaterlooWorks recruiting site to search and apply for positions. Once a position closes in WaterlooWorks, employers can review applicants and schedule interviews through the site. Employers determine the format for their interviews (i.e. length and type of interview, in-person or online, etc.). Once the interview stage has been completed, the employer will rank the candidates from 1 - 10. Interviewees will, in turn, rank the employers who they have interviewed with from 1 - 10. Matches are determined by a lowest sum algorithm (e.g., $1 + 1 = 2$) to determine a match ([University of Waterloo, Co-operative Education, Rank/Match, 2025](#)).

3. St. Jerome's University Library's Inaugural Arts Co-op

The St. Jerome's University Library typically employs between eight to ten casual Library Student Assistants who work at the library's Information desk. Many of these students are also co-op students, which means that they rotate off the library's student assistant roster when they are on their co-op term. In speaking with the library's staff, Atkin was curious to see if it might be possible for the library to offer co-op opportunities to students in the Faculty of Arts. She reached out to St. Jerome's Vice President Academic and Dean, Dr. Carol Ann MacGregor, to see if it might be possible for the library to secure funding for such a position.

Atkin was convinced that an Arts Co-op Position in the Library had the potential to create a meaningful work experience every term for one St. Jerome's student. It was very important to set goals and objectives that were mutually beneficial to both the student and the library. At the outset, there was a built-in understanding that each co-op student would draw on their own unique skill set and knowledge base and that no two co-op placements would be identical. The challenge would be to identify strategic areas of need within the library (for example, programming work, displays, circulation services, etc.) and to identify at the interview stage areas in which prospective co-op student might lend their talents, and areas in which the library could provide training and skills development to broaden and sharpen students' skillsets. Given the timing of the first co-op placement in January of 2023, it was also important that we incorporate elements into the position that allowed for peer-led student success and wellness initiatives. Lastly, from the outset, the library sought to create a position that offered full-time library staff the ability to coach and mentor students interested in careers in education, library science, archival studies, and the information professions.

The hiring process for co-op students is very well developed at the University of Waterloo, with the university providing support to prospective co-op employers at every stage. Prospective employers use the WaterlooWorks recruiting site to post job advertisements, review applications, schedule interviews, and rank candidates. The library obtained approval from the Office of the Vice President Academic and Dean to post the inaugural *Library and Archives Student Assistant* co-op position in August of 2022, with interviews occurring during the fall term. At that time, due to the changing nature of the Covid-19 pandemic, the library conducted all interviews online.

As an employer, there is an understanding that students participating in co-op program are applying to as many opportunities as possible to increase their chances of finding the position that is the best fit for their educational and career goals. Students in co-op expect that they will interview for multiple positions, and that the interview process will be competitive. Co-op students also know that the ranking system allows them to have a say in which position they ultimately accept. This is because, at the University of Waterloo, both the employer and the candidate rank one another, and the combination of these rankings is what leads to a match between employer and candidate. In this sense, the co-op matching system is also competitive for the employer (not just the student),

as the employer must make certain that the position appeals to students in the co-op program, particularly considering the other opportunities available to students in the program. In that sense, employers need to consider what they have to offer a co-op student, since co-op students will take this into consideration when completing their rankings.

There were two questions that Atkin was asked repeatedly during interviews: the first was, “can you describe what a typical week on the job will look like,” and the second was, “what training opportunities would be provided and what the onboarding process would look like.” It became clear to Atkin from the first interview onwards that co-op students (just like any new employee) want to know what to expect for their first week(s) on the job. Likewise, co-op students want their position to be successful, and for that to happen, they want to have a sense of what their onboarding process and training will look like - the same way one would for any other full-time employee. Thankfully, in preparing for the interviews, Atkin did have materials prepared as part of the position overview to give prospective candidates a sense of what to expect.

Since this co-op was new, Atkin could not draw on past co-op experience but was still able to tell the candidates what she would like to see develop from the position. Specifically, she wanted the new co-op to be a position in which the student could assist the library in community engagement through a variety of student-led activities. Since the library classrooms were free on Fridays, she wanted the students to think about what kinds of activities we could offer each week. Atkin provided students with some examples, such as painting workshops, crafting workshops, or other student success workshops, but stressed that she wanted the students to bring creativity to the position to help us design programming that would be of interest to their peers. In addition to the library programming side, she also wanted to stress that this position would include an opportunity to develop library and archives research skills. For example, co-op students would receive training so that they could provide support to our patrons at the information desk, as well as gain skills in designing archival exhibits through their work alongside library staff.

With regards to the co-op student’s first week, Atkin made sure to indicate during the interview that the successful applicant would receive a detailed schedule for their first week on the job. This schedule would include their initial meeting with Human Resources and IT, setting up the student in their office, a welcome lunch, providing the student with a tour and an opportunity to meet the staff at the St. Jerome’s University, and providing the student with scheduled time to complete required employee training (e.g. health and safety training, Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities (AODA) training). Atkin also let the candidates know that the successful applicant, once settled into their new role, would have scheduled library and archives skills training throughout their co-op placement. As Atkin has found, it is important for those considering hiring co-op students to keep in mind that the onboarding process should be the same as it would be for a regular employee. The more effort one puts into the onboarding process, the more opportunities there are for engaging with the student at the outset to ensure that they have a clear sense of what the expectations are for the role and to ask questions and build rapport with their new colleagues in the library.

In conducting the position interviews, Atkin scheduled eight interviews over the course of an entire day. The interviews were relatively short (25 minutes each) and consisted of a brief three-minute overview of the position before beginning the interview questions. Candidates were informed at the start of the interview that they would have a series of short answer questions (with the last question

being, “Do you have any questions about the position), and that responses would be limited to just a few minutes per question. The purpose of the interview was to gain a sense of where the students' interests lay, of what skills they brought to the position, of what skills they hoped to gain, and of how they dealt with difficult situations/challenges. The interview also provided an opportunity to ask questions related to time management and organizational skills. Atkin found it difficult to reach a final decision in her rankings because of the high quality of the applicant pool. In the end, however, once the employer and student rankings were submitted, Gatti was the successful candidate.

Gatti was a welcome addition to the library team. Although Atkin provided her with some initial assistance in organizing the first couple of library events, Atkin made a point of letting her know that this was a position that Gatti would be able to put her own stamp on. Gatti embraced her new role in the library and set to work planning library events with an emphasis on student well-being and student success. Many of the co-op student-led workshops emphasized arts and crafts and provided an excellent opportunity for students to de-stress. The feedback from the students who attended was entirely positive. Aside from the activities themselves (e.g. painting, cardmaking, Easter egg decorating, etc.), which were enjoyable in and of themselves, many of the students in attendance really wanted to connect with others. Post-COVID-19 pandemic, the co-op-led activities provided a venue for connecting with other students in person (which, following months of lockdowns, was well received).

As a member of the volunteer *Peer Academic Leaders (PALs)* on campus, Gatti also wanted to ensure that part of her programming initiatives focused on student success. In that capacity, she began offering *PAL* drop-in hours in the library twice a week throughout the term, providing academic guidance regarding writing, research, course-specific content, and assistance regarding the process for declaring one's major. Early on in her co-op, Gatti also received training on a number of library databases, as well as training related to the library's physical collections.

With regards to the archival element of the position, Atkin had envisaged that co-op students would gain some apprenticeship experience in this area. The Library had tentatively planned a donor recognition reception to mark its recent renovation, and Atkin wanted to create a display that included photographs tracing the evolution of St. Jerome's University's nearly 160-year history. In researching photographs with Gatti for the donor recognition reception display, Atkin provided Gatti with a mini tour of the archives and some of the unique collections it housed. In particular, Atkin wished to share with her the contents of an uncatalogued box marked “Relics and their documents” that she had discovered.

Atkin explained to Gatti that the university's archive contained two distinct fonds. The first is the university's archives, which contains documents, photographs and artifacts (e.g. university memorabilia), collected over the course of the institution's history. The second is related to the university's founders, the Congregation of the Resurrection, a religious order of Catholic brothers and priests. This collection, on permanent loan from the Congregation of the Resurrection in Waterloo, is extremely important to St. Jerome's University as it contains many important documents and materials related to the university and its founders. In sorting this collection, Atkin had stumbled upon the box marked “Relics and their documents.”

The box contained several other smaller ones, including a Christmas card box, a women's nylons box, a small recipe box, and cigar boxes. All were filled with relics of saints and their certificates of authenticity. There were also some miscellaneous pieces not stored in any particular boxes. Not all relics were accompanied by certificates, though many were. In some cases, the name of the saint was included on the object itself. Certificates came in different languages, primarily Latin, but also English and French. There were seven boxes in total, each containing multiple artifacts from different saints. As Atkin explained to Gatti, the relics were uncatalogued in the archival database, and the boxes themselves contained no accession numbers. Gatti, who was in the final year of her Honours Arts and Business degree, as a history major, was intrigued by this discovery and wanted to learn more. Atkin could see the potential for a research project for Gatti; however, given that her co-op term was coming to a close, she was unsure that the co-op would be the right way to go about it. Atkin reached out to her colleague in Medieval Studies, Steven Bednarski, for some advice. Given Bednarski's proficiency in Latin and his expert knowledge of church and medieval history, it seemed natural that the library should seek his advice in assessing this collection. In discussing the matter with Bednarski, Atkin noted the library's interest in assessing the contents of the collection, as well as Gatti's interest in studying it. Bednarski was intrigued and arranged a preliminary meeting with both Atkin and Gatti to discuss the objects. It was during that meeting that Bednarski proposed the idea to Gatti of conducting an Independent Study (HIST 491) towards the partial fulfillment of her degree requirements.

4. From Library Co-op Experience to Independent Study

As Gatti's co-op term came to a close, Atkin and Bednarski approached Gatti with the opportunity to study these ecclesiastical pieces in the form of an independent study course in the following academic term. In the following weeks, Bednarski worked with Gatti to develop a tentative plan of study and explore potential learning objectives. Finally, after receiving departmental permission through the Chair of History, Gatti enrolled in this independent study course and began her studies in the following September.

At the start of the Fall term, Atkin, Bednarski and Gatti reconvened to discuss the outline of the course and to establish a formal syllabus with timelines and deliverables. As well, taking into consideration the unique needs of the archival materials required for this study, Atkin provided Gatti with a study space in the St. Jerome's Library for the entirety of the Fall term, to allow her proper access to these materials while completing her research. Bednarski also provided Gatti with access to his digital humanities lab, the DRAGEN Lab, to conduct research and access study space. Additionally, she benefited from collaboration with the DRAGEN Lab team's knowledge and expertise whenever needed.

Throughout the term, Gatti attended weekly meetings with Bednarski and his team to provide research updates and seek guidance. She was responsible for submitting regular drafts, leading to a final paper at the end of the term, which covered the story of these relics' discovery in the archives, the history of the cult of saints and relics, specific case studies of two saints included in the archives, and an ultimate reflection on learning outcomes and how to use this experience to further achieve St. Jerome's University's mission for future students.

The overall collaboration between student, faculty, and librarian on this project also provided an excellent opportunity for the St. Jerome's Library and Archives to live up to one of the goals of the St. Jerome's University's Academic Plan, which includes a desire to:

"Transform the SJU Archives into a site of expanded scholarly activity and foster projects that elucidate St. Jerome's and its community [Strategic Plan Objectives 2.2, 2.3] a. Work with interested faculty to incorporate archival content into courses where appropriate (e.g., archival workshops and hands-on training for upper-level students) to encourage undergraduate student engagement with our digital and physical archival collections." St. Jerome's University. (June 16, 2023). Acts of Translation: St. Jerome's University Academic Plan (2023 – 2026). Retrieved from:

<https://sju.ca/sites/default/files/SJU%20Academic%20Plan%202023-2026.pdf>

5. Reflection on the Student Experience

From the beginning of Gatti's co-op term with the St. Jerome's Library, Gatti shared her excitement for the role and projects ahead, as she expressed that the position truly matched her studies and interests. As a History and Business student at the University of Waterloo, Gatti expressed how common it was for Arts co-op students to have to search deeply within a co-op role to recognize its connection to their program of study. Instead, when she began her co-op term at St. Jerome's Library, the library and academic setting, as well as the academic research that the role provided her the opportunity to pursue for various projects, allowed her to directly use her skills acquired in her Arts studies in a professional setting. As well as someone pursuing education as a future career, the ability to host both wellness and educational events for students, such as Easter Egg painting, which taught students about the traditions and history of Ukrainian Easter Eggs, allowed Gatti to use this co-op term to truly expand her personal and professional skills.

In addition to the job-specific responsibilities, Gatti shared that the eventual opportunity to bridge the library and archives knowledge that Gatti received in her co-op term, with the experience of working hands-on in the archives to produce an academic research paper, was invaluable to her academic and personal development. In this research, Gatti was able to use the knowledge she gained from her co-op role and further develop her research skills to study about the origins of these relics and their connection to the history of St. Jerome's University. Most of all, Gatti expressed that this research opportunity allowed her to analyze and present the importance that historical archives and pieces have on educational opportunities in schools and university classrooms.

This co-op-turned-independent research experience therefore, impacted her future career development as Gatti feels it has prepared her for a future in teaching and education. Having worked as a co-op student in the library and archives, Gatti not only practiced putting her historical knowledge into practice for herself, but gained knowledge on academic research, library and archives systems and library management that will make her a more knowledgeable and well-rounded educator for her future students.

Most of all, Gatti shared that the opportunity to continue to study these pieces and produce an academic paper on her findings allowed her to consider the educational opportunities that

historical pieces can offer students, something that she will bring to her future career as an educator.

As someone who participated in the co-op process as an Arts student, Gatti understood how difficult it could be to find meaningful opportunities. Her co-op experience and subsequent academic research opportunities instead showcased the impact that valuable work placements can have when teams properly and intentionally invest in these roles and into student experience. By creating opportunities like these, future students can not only learn about their fields of study through hands-on experiences but also create invaluable opportunities to further pursue their interests, long after the term has completed.

6. Reflection as a Faculty Member Bednarski has supervised dozens of undergraduate research projects over a span of twenty-five years and noted that each one brings unique challenges and rewards to the learner. In the case of Gatti's project, the challenges fell into two distinct categories: linguistic and historical.

Linguistically, the certificates of authenticity were written primarily in Latin and often required some degree of palaeographic interpretation due to their handwritten components. The handwriting, fortunately, was modern cursive and so simple enough to learn. The contents of the script, however, were often proper names, which often pose an initial challenge to new learners who may be unfamiliar with foreign equivalents of vernacular forenames. With support from the DRAGEN Lab's graduate students who were more proficient in medieval palaeography, Gatti quickly overcame this obstacle. Along the way, she learned an important lesson about historical records: the language used in official documents is often formulaic. This means that, initially, anyone studying historical records may struggle with their innate foreignness, but, in time, researchers often begin to identify formulae or patterns. Gatti soon did this. As a result, she became more and more proficient as she worked with the records.

Historically, Gatti soon realized it would be necessary to situate the objects and records within a broader context. To do this, she read broadly in the literature on the Cult of Saints, including its medieval origins. Medieval Europeans developed a complex theology around the holy, one that became widespread and common across the continent. This belief system essentially held that certain pure Christians were so favoured by God as to be imbued with extraordinary divine grace or favour. When they died, their earthly remains retained a vestige of this grace. It, in turn, could be accessed through physical contact with their corpses. As a result, Europeans developed a complex network of saintly shrines and made pilgrimages to visit them. This tradition of making an arduous journey to visit saintly remains is preserved still today, perhaps most famously at the shrine of Santiago de Compostela (St. James the Greater of Compostela) in Spain. Gatti's historical research, therefore, required her to develop a scholarly analysis of the belief system, authorities, traditions, and history surrounding the Cult of Saints.

Methodologically, time constraints prevented Gatti from conducting a comprehensive analysis of all the objects in the archive collection. Instead, after conducting a preliminary survey of the

collection, Gatti wisely decided to write a case study of two objects. She focused on supposed remains of Saints Anthony of Padua (1195 – 1231 CE) and Claire of Assisi (1194 – 1253 CE). The research paper she produced, thus, included a general historical analysis of the Cult of Saints and historical background on these two Italian saints in particular. As Gatti noted, “By studying these saints, their relics, and their impact on the world around them, readers can begin to understand the ongoing role of faith in a modern world, and therefore the importance of the study of these pieces in modern educational institutions.” Her goal, thus, was to articulate why it is important for archives containing saintly relics to situate them not only in terms of their historical importance, but to connect them to modern sensitivities. In developing her conclusions, Gatti cautioned against some modern Canadian institutions’ tendencies “to ignore older assets.” Implicit in her analysis was a sense that secular collections may have some discomfort with older ecclesiastical objects, placing these objects at risk of neglect. Far from being an argument for renewed religiosity, Gatti’s sentiment recognized that changes in belief systems over time should not preclude conservation and analysis of and continued interest in religious objects.

Gatti’s analysis wisely avoided speculation on the authenticity of the individual objects, which would be difficult to confirm. Instead, it proceeded on the premise that the objects had value in and of themselves, that they had been acquired and preserved by people who believed in their authenticity, and that, as a result, they merited continued conservation.

The final research paper Gatti produced was thirty-six pages in length, including a robust bibliography and appendices. The appendices reproduced digital images. Appendices A through B demonstrated the informal storage boxes used to conserve the artifacts and provided some preliminary details on their various contents; Appendix G reproduced images of loose artifacts not stored in the informal storage boxes; Appendix H reproduced an early plastic recipe box used to catalogue the objects and a loose relic stored therein; Appendix I reproduced the certificate and relic ascribed to Saint Anthony of Padua; and Appendix J did the same for those of Saint Claire of Assisi.

Gatti’s study provided an essential first step in a longer research process. Upon completion of her analysis, Bednarski and Atkin subsequently hired three additional co-op students. Those students completed the comprehensive analysis of the remaining objects by producing a detailed digital catalogue of all relics, including high-resolution digital photographs and transcriptions of certificates of authenticity. They also undertook proper conservation of every object and document. Preliminary work on creating 3D replicas of some objects was also attempted. As a result of Gatti’s work, and that of her three successors, the St. Jerome’s University Library now has a well preserved and well catalogued collection of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Catholic relics of medieval and early modern saints. This collection, notably, includes relics from the Canadian martyrs. Given the delicate nature of the collection, it is available for consultation by appointment in the rare books room of the university library.

Finally, Gatti’s preliminary analysis of the collection drew attention to its significance. Atkin’s discovery in the archive amounts to one of the most significant collection of church relics held in a Canadian university library. Future work will aim to produce 3D scans of as many objects as possible and present them in an online, open-access format.

7. Reflection as a Librarian

Upon learning about the Arts Co-op Program at the University of Waterloo, Atkin felt strongly that if the St. Jerome's Library should be so fortunate as to gain access to such a program, then she would need to work to ensure that any outputs would be beneficial both to the library and the program's students. This was really the central driver in creating the first co-op position. Atkin felt certain that the library would benefit from having access to the program, in large part, because of the quality and creativity of the students in our Arts Faculty. She also knew that as a librarian, that she had an opportunity to work with students who might not have previously considered a career in one of the information professions. Being able to offer a student a type of immersive employment opportunity, where they could create student-led programming, assist in the creation of library and archival displays, as well as assist at the information desk (assisting with circulation and reference), seemed, in her mind, to be a great crash-course into the field of information studies.

On the collaborative side, it was also top of mind for her (and still is) to find ways to encourage students, faculty, and other researchers to use our archival collections. One of the issues for Atkin is that our Archives, by virtue of their location, which is in the basement, are very much out of sight and out of mind. The only way to bring them into the foreground is to really work on finding ways to bring the items in our collections into the light of day (literally). Having students like Melissa work on archives displays and engaging with the physical materials is one of the best ways Atkin can think of to generate interest in our collections, since our patrons can actually see the outputs of the co-op student's research efforts.

What was so exciting about this first co-op was that it provided our student with a springboard into a new research project using materials that they encountered in the archives while they were working as a co-op student. Knowing that it is possible for students to enrol in an independent study course, like the one offered in the History Department, is important because it allows us to provide referrals to our co-op students, should they have an interest in pursuing additional study once their co-op term is done with us. However, she wouldn't want to suggest that the St. Jerome's Library only look at offering such opportunities to co-op students – to her, this needs to be something bigger, and the St. Jerome's Library need to find ways to make our faculty aware of the depth of our collection, so that it isn't just collecting dust!

8. Lessons Learned and Future Directions for Experiential Learning in Library and Archives at St. Jerome's

One of the major lessons learned from this experience has been the overall importance of building and maintaining ties between the library/archives and other academic departments. Although it is the express purpose of any academic library to serve the needs of the institution's various academic departments, how the library carries out its mission to serve will vary depending on the institution. For the St. Jerome's Library, service to the institution has largely involved discipline-specific collection development, information literacy workshops, library course reserves, circulation services, library and archives displays, and library programming with a focus on student academic success and wellness. As a reference and collections librarian, Atkin knows the

collection, perhaps better than anyone else, simply because she works with it each day. By working with students and faculty to generate interest in our collections through display work, and through special projects (like our ongoing Catholic Relics project), Atkin is hoping to broaden the awareness of St. Jerome's students and faculty about the library's holdings and to create opportunities for future teaching and research.

As Atkin notes, it is about envisioning what is in the realm of the possible. How might we connect collections with the curriculum – not just at the special projects level, but in terms of creating course components that facilitate the use of special collections? As this case example demonstrates, there is potential for librarians, faculty, and students to work together collaboratively to create experiential learning opportunities for students, as well as curriculum development opportunities for faculty through the awareness of library, archives and special collections.

Gatti's work began as a Library and Archives Student Assistant co-operative education placement, and through her exposure to special collections, she was able to see the potential for further academic study. Atkin and Bednarski's commitment to seeing her through her co-op and later, through her independent study course, demonstrates that the potential for librarian, faculty and student collaboration, even on a small scale, can have a big impact on our students. As this case study notes, through co-operative placements, like the one Gatti participated in, undergraduate students can gain meaningful hands-on experience of the kind normally reserved for graduate students. By leveraging librarian knowledge of special collections, faculty subject expertise, and student interest, as this case study in student/faculty/librarian collaboration demonstrates, can transform the undergraduate student experience for the better through enhanced research opportunities and mentorship.