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Georgia Library Spotlight - Augusta University, Black History Month at Reese Library

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GLA SPOTLIGHT

Augusta University Black History Month at Reese Library

How did Black History Month at Reese Library, Augusta University turn from library displays and passive programming quietly in the background into a Culmination Reception that put a spotlight on the library's displays, inspiring speeches, and a party of catered refreshments, which the library typically cannot afford?

It all began in December 2018 when the Academic Diversity and Inclusion Alignment Committee chair gave a challenge to each member: highlight diversity and inclusion in some way the following year. The committee is composed of faculty and staff from a range of departments and colleges across Augusta University with two members representing the libraries. The committee advises one of the vice presidents on priorities and initiatives for addressing diversity and inclusion opportunities within the academic programs, recruitment policies, curricular and co-curricular activities, service and outreach, scholarly efforts, and faculty development.

For years, Reese Library has carefully curated a book display for Black History Month. In 2018, the library introduced passive programming by having a Black history jigsaw puzzle near the display. For the challenge, the library suggested a display and expansion of the passive

programming with a different puzzle, coloring, and activity sheets on a Black history theme. The committee suggested incorporating students' wants into the library's annual Black History Month Display.

In early January 2019, the library placed tear-off sheets on easels in high traffic areas of the

library. On each easel the library wrote: "What would you like to see in our library's Black History Month displays? Share with us: book or movie titles, people, places, subjects, or themes." Students suggested specific titles and topics, "local black history," "a speech by Dr. Seretha Williams" (a professor from the English and Foreign Languages

department), and "free food." After two weeks of response collection, the library shared the responses with the committee.

The director of multicultural student engagement offered to collaborate with us by hosting a reception to highlight the displays, and from there the Reese Library Black History Month Displays and Reception were born. Reese Library partnered with the Office of Multicultural Student Engagement for event planning assistance with the speakers, refreshments, and advertising. For the request on local black history, the library invited Corey Rogers, a historian from the Lucy Craft Laney Museum of Black History as a guest speaker, and the library secured Dr. Seretha Williams for the keynote. The event was open to the public



and advertised around campus through flyers as well as digital and social media. Event attendance exceeded expectations, chair count, and floor space!

The library display cases on the first and second floors were filled with headshots of notable African American authors and artists and prints of their paintings as well as biographies, films,

and books about various African American cultures in the United States, the African diaspora, and Caribbean history.

To learn more about this event and other programs at Reese Library, visit the library website at <https://www.augusta.edu/library/reese/>.