Connecting & Capturing the Community through Conversation

Susanne Sakai

Special Collections Librarian

Book Arts & Special Collections
What’s a Living Library?

- Books are **real people** – volunteers willing to share their life story
  - get “checked out” by Readers (members of the Public) to engage in one-on-one conversation
  - Serve as a catalyst to foster dialogue and understanding between **strangers**, and provide the opportunity and a safe space for community members to get to know one another
LIVING LIBRARY

• International organization & movement that began in Copenhagen in 2000
• A way to challenges stigma & stereotypes:
  ➢ “Every human book from our bookshelf, represent a group in our society that is often subjected to prejudice, stigmatization or discrimination because of their lifestyle, diagnosis, belief, disability, social status, ethnic origin etc.”
• Trademarked

• Felt HL approach was too broad & sensational
• Wanted to focus more specifically on the community & everyday folks in it
• Allowed for creative freedom:
  ➢ Didn’t want to be limited by HL criteria: no themes, complete anonymity of Books, have to use their forms, etc.
Collection Development

- Most challenging part of the process
- Put out a general call & reached out to people I know
  - Those people reached out to people they knew
- Leverage your community contacts
Publicity

- Local news & media outlets
- Event listing websites
- Social media
- Poster/flyer
- Word of mouth
- Community Programs & Partnerships
The Set-Up
In Action

Lively conversation all around!
The other part: Archiving the Stories
Living Library Videos
now up on SFPL YouTube channel!

Naima https://youtu.be/twfYUALkrk0
Marilynn https://youtu.be/KV7Easuqs9M
George https://youtu.be/d8AFnxKu-Xo
Roger https://youtu.be/6P6xfwEi5bk
Monica https://youtu.be/2m6RPL3013k
Donna https://youtu.be/yo_gUIXM82o
Shizue https://youtu.be/oFShrUI-z4k