

Andrews University

## Digital Commons @ Andrews University

---

Faculty Publications

---

3-29-2023

### JWL Living Library Event: Borrow a Human Book and Read

Margaret Adeogun

Andrews University, [adeogun@andrews.edu](mailto:adeogun@andrews.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pubs>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Adeogun, Margaret, "JWL Living Library Event: Borrow a Human Book and Read" (2023). *Faculty Publications*. 4671.

<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pubs/4671>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact [repository@andrews.edu](mailto:repository@andrews.edu).

# JWL LIVING LIBRARY EVENT: BORROW A HUMAN BOOK AND READ



The Book “Scottie Baker” Presenting About His Many Experiences

By Margaret Adeogun

JWL hosted a Living Library event from March 28 – 30, 2023, from 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm every evening as part of the James White Library 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. It is the library’s first Human Library event. Instead of patrons borrowing physical books or browsing through new arrivals, humans served as open ‘books’ that readers could borrow and ‘read.’ The public service desk at the Reference area served as the browsing table. The event featured 14 living books and 36 readers. The anniversary committee set out to achieve the following objectives as they

planned for the Living Library event. These objectives guided the planning and execution of the events:

- Connect with diverse groups of the AU community within and off-campus;
- Learn, educate, and change perspectives;
- Gain deeper perspectives about life and how to overcome life’s challenges;
- Create an environment where people with shared values and goals engage in conversations that promote learning continu-

ously and collectively from the experiences of others; and

- Break barriers and bring learning into the open, where students can build academic and social networks for lifelong learning.

Based on these, the committee developed a broad collection of human books comprising of faculty, community members, retirees, and staff with varying experiences as missionaries, entrepreneurs, historians, preachers, writers, leaders, bird watchers, librarians, and more. The broad selection of “books”

with their varied and rich experiences about life and work enhanced the narratives. It made the encounter with readers highly informative, inspiring, and entertaining—call it “edutainment.” The Living Library bookshelf’s topics included:

- Integrating faith with law practice;
- Third culture kids as successful entrepreneurs;
- Tackling reference questions in the library;
- The uniqueness of the architecture library;
- Leadership in a multicultural

environment;

- Life and challenges of cross-cultured kids;
- Experiences of a couple in the mission field;
- Birds and their nature; and
- What it means to be a preacher and a woman.

The readers included students, members of the community, and children. The children particularly enjoyed the narratives about birds and their behavior.

As is typical of the human library method, readers checked out a ‘Living Book’ from the Human Library bookshelf (a collection of

human books). The two or three engaged in productive conversations about challenging topics in a comfortable and safe learning environment. It proved to be an enriching learning experience for the participants as they conversed with people face-to-face about real-life experiences. The event had an organic flow, and each group determined the length of time per session. In most cases, the living books and the readers spent more than 20 minutes per session in conversation. Some books had two to three sessions per night; others had only one. It all depended on the number of readers to a



Patrons Learning About The Life Of An Architecture Librarian. From The Book, “Kathy Demsky”

book and the nature of their engagement. It was an opportunity for the university community to connect, share their stories, break barriers, and better understand each other. The environment provided a framework for open and honest discussions about important issues. It was an innovative approach to publishing people as books and for readers to learn from real people.

The readers completed a survey after the event. This survey showed the impact of the Human Library on the Andrews University learning community—increased knowledge and broadened perspectives. The results revealed that the “books” effectively communicated their stories to the readers. The conversations helped the readers to explore their understanding and adjust their thinking. They felt connected to others through the experiences, values, and worldviews of the “books.” They valued talking to someone with

whom they would not usually engage in a conversation. For future similar events, they suggested that the event include students’ stories of transformation; issues of cultural shock in the mission field; international student issues, and additional topics that interest students more. And if possible, give students co-curricular credit to increase attendance.

Overall, the Living Library event was fun and fulfilling for the books and the readers. There was plenty of refreshments to share. The “Living books” were well selected; reading them was informative, inspiring, and educational. We encourage you to hold your own Human Library projects and publish people as books!



Patrons Enjoying Their Time With The Book “Stacie Hatfield”

---

Margaret Adeogun is the Marketing Librarian at the James White Library on Andrews University’s campus.

