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Student Designs Undergraduate Research Textbook Cover

Nov. 20, 2017

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— Charged with designing an academic textbook cover, Ania Bui '18 found inspiration beneath a soaring net hoisted in the air and illuminated by vibrant lights at the 2016 Adobe MAX Conference in San Diego, California.

Upon first seeing the massive sculpture created by conference speaker [Janet Echelman](#), Bui and the three other Illinois Wesleyan students she was with took out their cell phones and cameras.

"We just started taking pictures," Bui said. "You rarely get to see a sculpture so close. Plus, it was at night, so we saw the perfect contrast of the changing light projected on the net against the pitch black sky."

A month prior, Bui – a [computer science](#) and [art](#) double major – had agreed to design the cover for *[Undergraduate Research and the Academic Librarian: Case Studies and Best Practices](#)*, co-edited by Illinois Wesleyan Scholarly Communications Librarian Stephanie Davis-Kahl.

"We discussed having the cover be vibrant and exciting," Davis-Kahl said. "In the book, we talk about how undergraduate research can be this amazing learning process in which a student takes a topic they're passionate about, and takes a deep dive into it, along with a faculty mentor. I thought the cover would be a great way to visually translate what we say in the book."

After returning to campus from the Adobe MAX Conference, it occurred to Bui that the photos she took of the sculpture could be incorporated into her cover design. Bui shared her idea with Davis-Kahl, who liked the concept.

"One of the important factors in Janet Echelman's artwork is the idea of interconnectedness," Bui said. "So, I felt that it also worked well with what we were trying to convey in this book."

Bui also posted her images of the sculpture online and was subsequently contacted by a representative from Echelman's studio who asked to use some of Bui's photos on Echelman's official website. Without hesitation, Bui agreed.

For the cover design project, Bui selected a picture of the net illuminated by vivid pink and blue light. These colors, she hoped, would accentuate the cover when placed on a shelf next to traditionally plain textbooks.



Ania Bui '18 holds *Undergraduate Research and the Academic Librarian: Case Studies and Best Practices* for which she designed the cover.



The cover designed by Ania Bui '18 for *Undergraduate Research and the Academic Librarian: Case Studies and Best Practices*.

Underneath the title, which was printed in distinctive white letters, Bui repeated the letters in pink, yellow and white to contrast with the pink and blue sculpture. She shared her draft with Davis-Kahl, who forwarded the image to co-editor Merinda Kaye Hensley. After finalizing the design, Bui's cover was submitted to the publisher. A few months later, it hit the press.

"We thought she did a great job at conveying, visually, what undergraduate research is," Davis-Kahl said. "I just love how the colors change, and the lines making all of these connections. You have the thick lines and the thinner lines. It really brings the content of the book together. I also love how the letters kind of float above the image."

Earlier this month, a year after Bui first saw the soaring sculpture in San Diego, Davis-Kahl invited Bui into her Ames Library office. When Bui entered, Davis-Kahl handed her a freshly printed, just-delivered textbook wrapped in a familiar pink and blue cover design. Bui clutched *Undergraduate Research and the Academic Librarian: Case Studies and Best Practices* and smiled.

"It's actually pretty amazing, because you rarely get to see your projects printed," Bui said, still holding the book. "Usually, it's all digital and on the screen, or printed as a prototype for class. It's amazing just to touch your artwork, instead of only seeing it on the screen."

Bui expects that her experience creating a published textbook cover will be advantageous when she enters the job market after graduating this spring. Thanks to her collaboration with Davis-Kahl, Bui can hand perspective employers the printed book about undergraduate research for which she designed the cover.

"We're really happy with how it turned out," David-Kahl said. "And the whole project is really indicative of what the Illinois Wesleyan experience can be."

By John Twork