

Project Description

August 2024 by MDavid

The UMD library invited Kathy McTavish to join us as our “artist in residence.” Residence is the key word in this invitation. She was hanging around here all the time anyway, and was keenly interested in being able to stay after the early closing time of our summer hours.

We have quickly embraced our artist as one of us, engaging in a search for common ground, shared understanding, the ability to see each other. Library staff often appear as invisible helpers in the hazy idea of what a library is. It feels good to have someone pay attention to us. And Kathy is really paying attention. And we love to hear what she is thinking; we can follow the thought tendrils that creep in to connect words, paper, shelves, metadata, predictive text.

It’s a joint production. Changing our minds.

All good, right? But what is actually happening over here? The artist has been meeting with individual library staff members to learn about what we do, attending a few staff meetings/gatherings. It’s lots of conversation, then the artist goes away (or sometimes comes back to stalk the quiet, empty library) and writes - words, phrases, poems, code. We end up with images and text strewn on a counter on the second floor, below monitors that loop straight line impressions that vaguely evoke our environment. Come take a look, there’s lots to absorb.

The Residency will leak out onto campus in the shape of class visits, a Visual Culture Series conversation, and a reception - eventually. This whole thing will continue through the end of spring semester, pay attention to your library so you don’t miss anything.

