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CAS 138T

Advocacy Project Explanation and Justification

With the fire of book banning roaring across the nation, kairoitic targets range from vital contemporary works like *Maus* to classics such as *To Kill a Mockingbird*. These efforts wish to smother any “controversial” material — yet all this succeeds in doing is censoring and limiting reality. By delivering our own banned book showcase into existence, we have shined a spotlight upon the very books that censors strive to suppress. We call it: Banned Book Tinder. From the American Library Association to the New York Times, we curated censored books to synthesize into a Google Form, so participants could easily move through the experience and learn.

Our design process began with research. We first searched for a variety of banned books and then determined which we should include in the project. We found around 20 banned books that were possible candidates for our project, but we selected our top 6 picks. The books that made the final cut were selected on popularity, likability, and in tandem with the other books. We wanted to ensure we had a variety of genres present so everyone could find at least one book they liked. We then researched Tinder’s user interface in order to develop the design of our project. We also looked at examples of Tinder bios so we could write our own. After writing all of the bios, we began photoshopping pictures of the covers into the Tinder format with their own unique

bios. We then inserted these images into a Google Form and programmed it to take viewers throughout the questionnaire at their own pace.

Our goals for this project included raising awareness about censorship and banned books as well as engaging our peer audience through technology. Utilizing this digital method of communication, we traveled the pathway of pixels and reached out to others through their screens. Both of us tapped into the essence of social media influencers, creating content to inspire our viewers to action. Over the course of several days, we posted on social media platforms popular with people our age, incentivizing participation with the chance to win a \$20 Amazon gift card. We also sought opportunities to reach out to surrounding people in our community, like cashiers at bookstores and event coordinators in our residence hall. Two people of note in our communicative circle include a librarian and a multimedia news page organizer. The former is Fundraising and Programming Librarian Kristen Wallo, who has worked at the Valley Community Library for 7 years. She offered support and invaluable advice while we were crafting our Banned Book Tinder. The latter is Lucy “Luce” Blakiston, who co-founded a signature brand of whip-smart news updates that spans Instagram (@shityoushouldcareabout with 3.6 million followers), newsletters (daily email updates about current happenings), podcasts (two distinct, witty escapades into the modern world), and more. After taking time out of her day to participate in Banned Books Tinder herself, she applauded our finished product. We hope to pursue further interaction.

Even as this semester draws to a close, the responses from our audience have blown our minds wide open. Between unprompted resharing and generous opportunities to further boost our project, people went out of their way to advance our

literary advocacy. In the open-answer question at the end of the Google Form, over two-thirds of the participants took the time to describe their favorite book. This deeper thinking about literature and its inherent value is exactly what we were striving to achieve through our project, and the people did not disappoint. Moving forward, we will soon draw the winner of the \$20 gift card, and continue to speak out against the banning of books. Everyone should be able to read what they please, after all.

Link to Banned Books Tinder Google Form: <https://forms.gle/TAqr1og2RqkhvEmb8>