Faculty Development Grant Report  PRELIMINARY 3-14-14

Submitted by Rebecca Chamlee, Associate Professor
Communication Arts Department

Funded Project:

Funds for materials to produce Where Stucco Meets Chaparral, an artist’s book that examines seven indigenous plants through botanical and herbarium collection data. The main text focuses on natural history and addresses the dangers facing our fragile native wildlands from prolonged drought, increasing voracious wildfires and urban sprawl.

Bound in three states the 96-page edition of Where Stucco meets Chaparral will be 100 copies at 6 x 9 x 1 inches.

The Faculty Development Grant amount of $2,500.00 will offset the cost of paper and materials needed to realize this project.

Progress so far:

All of the materials for the project have been purchased and paid for out-of-pocket. The type was the biggest expense; setting and distributing is labor intensive and time consuming.

The typeface I chose for this California-themed book is California Old Style that Frederic W. Goudy designed in 1938 for the University of California.
Detailed letterpress printed botanical images of the plants through their seasonal life cycles contrast hand carved impressionist representations of the environmental context where they prevail. Short prose poems illustrate the personal connection to the landscape and its influence on the lives of my family over the years.

Where Stucco meets Chaparral is entirely letterpress printed using handset metal and wood type, hand-carved relief plates and photopolymer plates. The paper of each signature consists of a folio of lightweight colored abaca wrapped around a Somerset Book Wove cotton folio with a quarto-folded sheet of kozo forming the center spread. The handmade abaca has a distinctive rattle similar to the sound of walking on dry fallen leaves in colors that recall the landscape. The cotton sheet provides a contrast in texture and the excellent printing capability required for the detailed images of the specimens. By printing the background mountain images verso and the foreground landscape images recto on the translucent kozo and then quarto-folding the sheet, dimension and depth in the landscape images is achieved.

The center spreads are laid out on my studio work tables as the printing progresses.

Botanical images of indigenous plants are printed using four photopolymer plates in extremely tight registration.