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Creating Digital Art History: Library, Student, and Faculty Collaboration

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Abstract: Over the last two decades, teaching, learning and research in higher education have developed a growing digital presence. Digital development in the humanities has been slow relative to most other areas in academia, and with some exceptions art and art history have enjoyed slow digital growth within the humanities. Within this environment, the article here presents one collaborative model for digital art history, rare in its exclusive focus on undergraduate "junior scholars". Undergraduate senior-level art history and studio art students at Providence College collaborate annually with art history and studio art faculty to publish their senior theses in print format as the *Art Journal*. In the last few years, students, faculty and digital library staff have enhanced this collaboration to include the publishing from process to product of the *Art Journal* as a complementary *digital Art Journal*. They collaborate in creating **digital art history** and **digital studio art** in order to bring exponentially greater meaning, significance and visibility to the students' senior culminating works through real-world digital publishing, including quality control, copyright issues and ideas related to persistent access and ongoing global visibility for the scholarly and creative works and for the student scholars. These students function as real-world collaborative scholarly partners in publishing their culminating academic and artistic work globally and persistently accessible in Providence College's digital repositories. This case study evidences engagement in meaningful digital knowledge creation focused on the intellectual and creative output of student-scholars and student-artists (art historians and studio artists) as a model for other student-faculty-digital library professional collaborations.

Introduction

Since at least the middle of the 1990's, faculty and students in higher education and other scholars have created, gained access to and made use of progressively more research knowledge resources and services digitally on the Web. Scholars in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), the medical fields and the quantitative social sciences have led in the development and use of digital, Web-based resources and tools. Scholars in the humanities have been slower and more hesitant to adopt digital, Web-based tools and media for publishing, dissemination and communication of their scholarship. Art history scholars have been among the most hesitant of the humanists (Schonfeld, 2009). The reasons and rationale for such hesitation are myriad, complex and at times individual to the art historian. With the broad culture of art history and digital art history as backdrop, this article presents for tertiary education faculty, students and library professionals a case study and model of collaborative creation of digital art history among a team of scholars (senior faculty scholars and junior student scholars) and digital library professionals.

Art historians report several deeply held and firmly reasoned arguments for the hesitations vis-à-vis using digital technological tools, platforms and resource collections as well as for their emphasis on firsthand interaction with the physical art objects and with the physical collections of art. For some scholars, firsthand personal examination of and interaction with primary sources is irreplaceable by using digital surrogates. A recent issue of the journal *Visual Resources- An International Journal of Documentation* (March-June, 2013) was devoted entirely to digital art history (selected articles in References) and pertinent issues. Another recent publication (Schonfeld, 2014) focuses more broadly on research practices of art historians but also looks at art historians' relationships to digital technological tools, platforms and resource collections. Here some scholars find advantages in the digital as complementary to and enhancing of the physical. Other monographs, articles and reports shed light on the slowly (not dynamically) evolving field of digital art history. As is true for much of research collections in the current library world (the inexorable move to digital), it may be most prudent and practical to view the physical and the digital as a seamless blend (both-and, mutually inclusive) rather than as in any way exclusive of one another (either-or).

Art Historian's Dilemma of Personal Investigation

In terms of methods or work processes, art historians emphasize personal investigation, viewing and analyzing art objects (size, shape, form, color, texture, etc.) as primary, which often precludes use of the digital remediation (digital online image) of the object. Viewing the digital remediation might be very useful in deciding whether to undertake travel for personal viewing but it does not replace it. Personal interaction with an art object continues to be a primary criterion on which most scholarly description, analysis, interpretation, comparison, etc., are based, especially as an art historian moves her/his study to formal scholarly publication and/or presentation. With the personal, physical interaction having primacy in research, it is reasonable that the personal, physical would also have primacy in publication (Ballon, 2006; Quigley, 2013; Whalen, 2009; Zorich, 2012).

Art History and "the Digital"

One group of art historians, conservators and technical art historians often emphasizes use of digital technology tools to do analysis or advanced imaging of an art object. However, as one author (Drucker, 2013) states, digital art history is not strongly represented in the most common understanding of "the digital humanities" (which emphasizes tools, methods/processes, activities such as XML-text-encoding/TEI, text mining, computational, statistical and informational components of a work). What is lacking for digital art history to advance as more substantive digital humanities are components such as development of digital repositories, art-friendly database creation, common metadata enhancement competencies, provenance studies in the digital realm, visual or cultural digital analytics, and new approaches to curating and publishing for the digital realm (Drucker, 2013). In lieu of digital art history (i.e., art history as digital humanities), it is much more common for art historians to involve themselves in digitized

art history, digital technology-enabled art history and digital technology-facilitated art history (Gaehtgens, 2013).

In Lieu of Digital Art History

Digitized art history includes those files, texts, objects, indices, catalogs, images, etc., which have been transformed (remediated) from print to digital. Some of these representations of digitized art history are digital technology-enabled art history, where new software or hardware has a transformative impact (e.g., Reflectance Transformation Imaging), and/or digital technology-facilitated art history, where technology has a more incidental impact (Schonfeld, 2014). If digitized art history has been transformed in any of these ways, one can consider the value, impact and/or usability to be enhanced. A relevant example of such an enhancement is the dynamic hyperlinking of a textual term or phrase to a Web-based image, document, collection, etc. This dynamic hyperlinking in digital art history often significantly enhances the text, as it were, with one or more images which evidence, elucidate, illuminate, provide context for, or otherwise explicate the meaning and significance of text.

The Digital as Resource

The Web and digital technology have brought digital art / art history surrogates to researchers in an often more expedient and efficient manner. These online digital surrogates also enmesh the formerly discrete areas of primary and secondary sources together in a manner often revealing surprising relationships, which were perhaps less visible in segregated primary and secondary collections (Bell, 2013). Numerous online digital art collections (ARTstor, CAMIO, the Getty collections, among others) provide expedient and efficient access to a greater quantity and variety of images, although some art specialists decry the variation and degradation of the images in digital form (Kelly, 2013). Search tools like Google or larger collections like ARTstor often create alternative pathways to relevant information and to surprising relevancies otherwise more difficult to find and discern.

The digital environment also provides art historians with opportunities to both collect large quantities of digital images for their research and to curate and house their own collections of digitized images. Even when researchers retain preference for the physical object or image, access to and ownership of large digital collections offer enhanced access to and often facilitates connections between a larger, more varied and richer body and oeuvre of research objects.

A Case for Cooperation, Coordination and Collaboration for Art History

The Department of Art and Art History at Providence College has enjoyed a long and deeply respected reputation at the College and in New England higher education (www.providence.edu/art). Its faculty and curricula have long been central to the College's Core programs and enjoyed a consistent popularity with students as majors and minors. Central to its programs is a long-standing initiative resulting in an annual collection of student senior thesis

projects: *Art Journal*. The *Art Journal* enjoys the leadership of a faculty member selected on a rotating basis, assisted by the departmental Visual Resources Specialist. For many years the *Art Journal* has been a high-quality print document and product of art history and studio art seniors, which served the Department, the students and their support community with clear aesthetic and intellectual evidence of their journeys and successes at the College. The *Art Journal* enjoyed high value in a relatively small circle of senior and junior scholars and their community, but it rarely enjoyed concomitant value in the larger art, art history or intellectual world.

Beginning in 2006, the College library launched its digital repository program using the BePress Digital Commons platform (Digital Commons, 2014). Over time the library developed more extensive resources (facilities, hardware and software, professional and para-professional staff expertise) and built capacities for the ingestion and publication of more and more varied content. All content is open-access-compliant (discoverable by any internet / Web search); all text is OCR / optical character recognition processed (making it key word and key phrase searchable). The Digital Commons platform at the College offers unlimited storage / access capacity. Because the Digital Commons platform is more facile for text than for media, the library acquired a second, media-compliant digital repository tool, Innovative Interfaces' ContentPro tool (ContentPro, 2014) , which also provides unlimited capacity at the College. The library and its newly formed Digital Publishing Services / DPS (Digital Publishing Services, 2014) unit were now capable of larger scale multimedia publishing ventures.

The library and the Art and Art History Department share a common interest in several higher education streams of activity: 1) teaching, learning and research, 2) faculty-student collaborative academic work, 3) cross-department and cross-divisional cooperation, and 4) a deep concern and commitment to the arts and aesthetics. As a result of these shared interests, library and Art and Art History professionals developed informal, incidental relationships over time. These relationships were built as a result of collaborative participation in numerous campus-wide projects (e.g., the Annual Celebration of Student Scholarship and Creativity, the Interdisciplinary Faculty Seminar, and a joint task force focused on more reasonable management of the Art and Art History Department's image collection). Through these cooperative initiatives and projects, supportive and prudent Art and Art History Department faculty and administrators and the Head of Digital Publishing Services began engagement around the possibility of digitally publishing the *Art Journal* as a complement to (not a replacement for) the annually published print tome. Within two years the library and Art and Art History groups developed structure and process for dual publication of the seniors' capstone intellectual and artistic work in the Digital Commons and the ContentPro digital publishing environments.

What began as incidental coordination and cooperation on campus-wide initiatives of shared interest was intentionally developed into meaningful collaboration vis-à-vis dual publication of the *Art Journal*, simultaneously in print and online/digital. The early discussions concerned the Department's and the library's desires to pursue publication of the *Art Journal* digitally.

An early issue focused on the possibility and feasibility of dual publication. It would require additional time, energy and resources by the Department, the library and the students. It would take an academic year to design and plan structures and processes for the Department faculty and students and for the library to make simultaneous print and digital editions feasible.

An additional issue was the desirability of dual publication. The library was eager to expand its digital publishing enterprise and to build relationships between Digital Publishing Services and target groups at the College, who might benefit from the process of publishing and the visibility brought to their published intellectual and artistic work. The Art and Art History Department faculty and students provided an already finely tuned process and a resulting high-quality intellectual and artistic product (the *Art Journal*), a bright group of "junior scholars" who might benefit from the publishing experience, and the opportunity to bring high visibility to an otherwise minimally visible intellectual and artistic tome.

A final issue was whether to focus on eventual replacement of the print *Art Journal* by the digital. The Department maintained its emphasis on the provenance of the print edition of the *Art Journal*. The library and Digital Publishing Services readily supported the dual edition approach as a common and mutually beneficial approach. Thus, unnecessary anxiety over format competition, dominance or loss was avoided through easy collaborative compromise, and both parties agreed to move forward with dual format publication.

Process-to-Products: Print ↔ Digital

The Art and Art History Department has been able to follow, perhaps even refine, its traditional practices in using the senior seminar to prepare students for the capstone experience and product completion. Art history seniors were shepherded through the processes of acquiring (usually through purchase) print copyrights for image use in the theses. The Department continued to use a team approach (Visual Resources Curator, et al) in the desktop-publication (InDesign) of the senior products into an *Art Journal* tome, which was annually prepared and sent to the printer; this practice has been allowed to continue unchanged.

Beginning with the 2012 issue of the *Art Journal*, Art and Art History Faculty and Digital Publishing Services staff collaborated to guide and shepherd senior students (junior scholars) through the process of publishing their capstone works both in print and in digital format. Two aspects of the process for the print edition rose in interest, as all products were additionally prepared for both digital and print publication, and these were real world professional issues. At that time it was the practice for students to assume copyright costs for images used in the print edition. As there were potentially additional copyright costs for digital publishing, the Art and Art History Department, Digital Publishing Services and the senior students negotiated and agreed that any additional costs would be borne by the library (eventually our research led us to conclude Fair Use applied and additional copyright costs would not be incurred). Second, several studio art students either created born-digital art and transformed (mediated) the objects

into print format or employed digital tools in their artistic processes to enhance, merge or otherwise transform their art objects. Thus, several artists were able to digitally publish born-digital art, without moving it into print – a real world professional consideration.

As in previous years, an Art and Art History Department team led by a faculty member and the Visual Resources Curator shepherded and managed collection of the final products from the studio art and art history students and (using InDesign) created both a PDF of each student's product and a merged PDF of the entire issue of the *Art Journal* (*Art Journal*, 2014). The Visual Resources Curator then provided these PDF files to Digital Publishing Services for ingest (upload) into the Digital Commons. Additional files of original art work were uploaded into ContentPro for each of the art studio students (Studio Art Majors, 2014). The merged PDF file is identical to the file sent for print publication, resulting in identical dual published editions: print and digital.

Our Experience with Three Years of the *Art Journal.*

The *Art Journal* site (*Art Journal*, 2014) defaults to the latest available issue, and each issue has a name (e.g. 2013 *Musings*, 2012 *Interface*, 2014 *Bound*); three digital issues of the *Art Journal* are available online, 20123, 2013 and 2014. The site provides extensive navigation, manipulation, searchability and sharing. The left navigation of the Digital Commons *Art Journal* site (*Art Journal*, 2014) links to the home page of the Art and Art History Department; the ContentPro Studio Art Majors site links to students' images; an About page links to the department's statement (see below); Department and Digital Publishing Services/DPS contacts links to DPS staff; Most Popular Papers in a single issue or in all *Art Journal* issues links to most-downloaded of the papers. When viewing the site, the researcher may **select an issue** or **search all issues** and can search with key words or phrases (as all texts are OCR-ed and searchable). The researcher may view and search the entire issue as a single PDF or the PDF of an individual Studio Art piece or (art history) thesis.

The About page presents the Art and Art History Department's statement:

> "The Providence College art journal has been the capstone experience for the Art and Art History students since the inception of the Department. It represents the publication of the thesis works of both the History and Studio seniors, and is thus comprised of exhaustively-researched academic papers on art and artists, as well as the original works of our practicing artists in a variety of media. The production of the art journal itself is also the work of Art and Art History students who edit the papers, design the journal, and squire the copy into publication. Since inclusion onto the College's Digital Commons, the theses have enjoyed consistent attention from artists and art historians from outside the College and the region."

The right navigation allows the researcher to download the file; view related content across all Digital Commons repositories (e.g. Art and Design Commons; Fine Arts Commons); and share using 288 Web-based social network sharing tools.

Studio Art Student Products

Each Studio Art student titles his/her collection (e.g., Hide and Seek, Solitaire, Memory Tokens by Tess Wilson, etc.) and presents his/her work with an abstract and recommended citation:

> "Hide and Seek - Tess Wilson, Providence College. Abstract - I see myself as an analyst of my surroundings. I have a predisposition for noticing and appreciating miniscule details in life. Consequently, I take photographs and make digital drawings of found objects that possess textured qualities. Whether walking to class, waiting for the train, even sitting in my kitchen at home, texture is everywhere. My collages are meant to avoid fixity; but most especially, my collages are meant to confront the notion of abstraction and reality. Through digital imaging, I alter reality by manipulating the color, light and detail of an object at close range. To me, abstraction is a complete departure from reality, yet reality requires creative interpretation and expression. I feel that as an artist I put my creative spin on my observations while being true to the source. I want my viewers to think of memories of specific locations when viewing my work; I want my work to be seen as a unique entity to each individual. My intention is to magnify all of the tiny, insignificant details that very often go unnoticed yet still deserve our appreciation."

Each Studio Art student's page provides a recommended citation, e.g., "Wilson, Tess (2013) "Hide and Seek," Art Journal: Vol. 2013: Iss. 1, Article 4. Available at: http://digitalcommons.providence.edu/art_journal/vol2013/iss1/4." Each Studio Art student's site also provides a right-navigation link to the Download, which includes the student's statement and (images of) original artwork. The page also links via the left navigation to (additional images of) the student's artworks on the Digital Publishing Services site.

Art History Student Theses

Each Art History student's thesis page provides similar options as those of the art studio student pages (i.e., title, recommended citation, download and navigation and sharing options). The one major exception is that there is no linking out to additional images on ContentPro. As with the art studio student publishing, the dual publication is in many ways real world professional publishing.

Conclusions

With few exceptions (Christopher Witcombe's portal provides early and notable examples), art historians and digital humanists generally agree that art historians hold strong and often well-founded hesitations vis-à-vis digital art history. There is also clear agreement concerning some of the advantages offered by the digital online environment as concerns digital resources and tools. Primary agreement is in the area of access to a greater quantity, variety of (mediated images of) art objects in an efficient manner. The quality and provenance of those online art objects are disputed, as are the changes in relationship between the art history researcher and his/her research topic, changes which are inherent to the online digital environment: the researcher's personal investigation is surely altered when moved to the digital online relationship.

Given these hesitations which pertain to Providence College art history faculty as well as art historians generally, there are still aspects of digital art history, or at least digitized, digitally-enhanced art and art history, which exist naturally throughout the current higher education environment and in the practice of current junior scholars as discussed here. Several of the students note that their work either begins digitally or at least passes through digital environments in its conception, transformation, discovery or scholarly / artistic communication. This is becoming more common among current junior art and art history scholars and can well serve tertiary education faculty, students and library professionals as a guiding model, a torchlight of sorts, advancing and further opening the way to digital art history in the Academy as an accepted, important and very relevant discipline.

The processes, experiences, limitations, responsibilities and variety of options involved in the studio art and art history students' senior work (process to product) mimic in many aspects those of real world professionals. These students have experienced the real professional world of practicing studio artists and art historians, even if as protected novitiates shepherded by a team of faculty and digital publishing professionals. The significance of this case of creating digital art history, creating the digital and enhanced *Art Journal*, lies in the rarity, even uniqueness of such a collaboration focused exclusively on undergraduate, junior-scholar art historians and studio artists. Here, in addition to the print *Art Journal* volume, which former students had as evidence of their work and shared with a small community, current Providence College studio art and art history students also enjoy a digital age, persistent presence visible to the scholarly world and beyond, whether they pursue studio art, art history, a related field, or an entirely different vocation. Their liberal arts and fine arts education has been complemented by a dose of applied, illiberal arts reality – evidence persists in the digital *Arts Journal* in which they have published. Another significance of this case, this model is that it can be scaled and adapted to the educational and developmental realms of other junior artists and art historians at other educational, academic and scholarly institutions.

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Select Digital Art History Resources

This selection of digital art, art history and related sites is neither all inclusive nor complete. It is rather intended to present examples of a range of resources. Most are open-access, open-Web; proprietary resources are indicated by an *asterisk.

The sites range from continental (Europeana) to national (Library of Congress, British Library), museums (Art Institute of Chicago, Metropolitan Museum of Art), individual artist-focused (Van Gogh), academic institution (University of Wisconsin), foundation sponsored (Mellon's College and University Art Museums, Getty sites, projects and tools), computational tools (Digging Into Data), citizen-sourced (Wikimedia, Creative Commons), single scholar (Christopher Witcombe), open courseware (Digital Art History 101), open education resources (TED), interdisciplinary (University of Maryland's art, art history, archaeology), and sub-disciplinary (architecture).

The *Art Journal* case presented here (print and digital Website) is a rare sub-category: undergraduate student-created resources within a College's departmental Webpresence. As such it evidences the relative scholarly value of such local collaborations via-a-vis high profile digital art and art history resources.

Art History Resources by C.L.C.E. Witcombe - http://arthistoryresources.net/ARTHLinks.html

*ARTstor – http://www.artstor.org

*ARTstor Shared Shelf - http://www.artstor.org/shared-shelf/s-html/shared-shelf-home.shtml - includes content contributed by ARTstor Shared Shelf members

Scholars Resource - http://www.scholarsresource.com/

The British Library - https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary

Creative Commons - http://search.creativecommons.org/

Daguerreotypes at Harvard - http://preserve.harvard.edu/daguerreotypes/

DeviantArt - http://www.deviantart.com/

Europeana - http://www.europeana.eu/

Getty Open Content Program - http://www.getty.edu/about/opencontent.html

Getty Search Gateway -
 http://search.getty.edu/gateway/search?q=&cat=highlight&f=%22Open+Content+Images%22&rows=10&srt=a&dir=s&pg=1

The Getty - http://www.getty.edu/

Getty Images: http://www.gettyimages.com/

Getty Research Institute Project for the Study of Collecting and Provenance -
 http://www.getty.edu/research/tools/provenance/

Metropolitan Museum of Art - http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online
       http://www.metmuseum.org/research/image-resources#scholarly

Rijksmuseum - https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en

Yale University Art Gallery - http://artgallery.yale.edu/

*Grove / Oxford Art Online - www.oxfordartonline.com

Catalog of Art Museum Images Online - http://camio.oclc.org/

Digital Karnak - http://dlib.etc.ucla.edu/projects/Karnak

Digital Roman Forum - http://dlib.etc.ucla.edu/projects/Forum

Art Institute Chicago – Online Catalogs –

http://www.artic.edu/collections/books/online-scholarly-catalogues

Digging into Image Data to Answer Authorship-Related Questions (DID-ARQ) (National Center for Supercomputer Applications, UIUC - http://isda.ncsa.illinois.edu/DID/

Blue Mountain Project – Historical Avant-Garde Periodical for Digital Research - http://bluemountain.princeton.edu/index.html

Your Paintings Tagger - http://tagger.thepcf.org.uk/

InscriptiFact - http://www.inscriptifact.com/

College and University Art Museums. Marion M. Goethals and Suzannah Fabing, W. Mellow Foundation, 2007 - http://mac.mellon.org/CUAM/cuam_report.pdf

Digital Art History 101 - http://digitalarthistory.iwarp.com/

Technology, Entertainment, Design: http://www.ted.com/

Wikimedia Commons – images: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page

Wikimedia Foundation: http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Wikimedia_Foundation

Google Images: http://images.google.com/

Google Photos: http://picasaweb.google.com/

Prints & Photographs Online - Library of Congress: http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/

Flickr Commons with Library of Congress: http://www.flickr.com/commons

Library of Congress Photostream: http://www.flickr.com/photos/library_of_congress

National Academy Museum & School of Fine Arts: https://nationalacademy.org/index.asp

Van Gogh's Letters: http://www.webexhibits.org/vangogh/

Van Gogh, The Letters: http://vangoghletters.org/vg/

Van Gogh Gallery: http://www.vggallery.com/index.html

Van Gogh Museum: http://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/vgm/index.jsp?lang=en

University Wisconsin Digital Arts Collections: http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/Arts/

Architecture for Humanity: http://architectureforhumanity.org/

Netherlands Architecture Institute: http://en.nai.nl/

ArchNewsNow: http://www.archnewsnow.com/

Great Buildings: http://www.greatbuildings.com/

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Archaeology: http://www.archaeology.org/

Archaeological Institute of America: http://www.archaeological.org/

Archaeology on the Net: http://archonnet.tripod.com/

Museum of Underwater Archaeology: http://www.uri.edu/mua/

ArchaeoSeek: http://www.archaeoseek.net/

Art, Art History, Archaeology: http://www.lib.umd.edu/guides/artinternet.html

About the Author

Dr. Donald Russell Bailey has taught language, literature, European and East Asian cultures, aesthetics, pedagogy and information studies since the early 1980's. With a Ph.D. in German Studies, Master's degrees in Curriculum & Instruction pedagogy and library studies, Bailey leads and develops libraries and collections for the digital age including: knowledge creation, collecting, organizing and interpreting. Bailey pursues partnerships with subject specialists, "techsperts", funding agencies and non-profit organizations to develop, evolve and sustain resources, services and facilities for teaching, learning and research in the digital age.