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Planning a Juried Art Exhibit in an Academic Library and Providing Digital Access in an Institutional Repository

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Abstract

This article details one academic library's experience organizing a juried art exhibit, open to the campus and local community, and making digital images of the artwork available in the university's institutional repository. The article also outlines considerations when creating a digital representation of the art exhibit in the institutional repository.

Introduction

Academic libraries host art exhibits to make connections on campus and to engage the local community (Cho, 2014; Lotts, 2016; and Mullins & Watkins, 2008), and some plan juried exhibits or juried competitions for commissions (Beals, 2007; Lewis & Schmidt, 2007; and Oliver, 2012). In Spring 2015, Boise State University's Albertsons Library organized a juried art exhibit, one of many events commemorating the Library's 50th anniversary. This article describes planning the Juried Art Exhibit for the campus and local community, along with the steps taken to create a lasting record of the exhibit in ScholarWorks, the university's institutional repository. The event provided an opportunity to diversify ScholarWorks' collections by including more visual works to complement the text-based scholarship. This article contributes to a developing conversation about making digital representations of artwork available in institutional repositories.

Background

A public institution of over 23,000 students, Boise State is the largest university in Idaho situated in a metropolitan area of more than 675,000 residents. Boise has a well-established and continually growing local arts scene supported by the Boise City Department of Arts and History, local art galleries, and the Boise Art Museum. With no formal exhibit program, Albertsons Library provided space for exhibits once or twice a year, curated by Art Department faculty and classes, student art organizations, and community groups. The Juried Art Exhibit was among the first art exhibits to be included in ScholarWorks.

Albertsons Library implemented ScholarWorks in 2009 to showcase the creative and scholarly outputs of the university's faculty, staff and students. ScholarWorks runs on the Digital Commons system, a proprietary institutional repository and publishing platform from bepress. The institutional repository hosts over 5,000 documents that are primarily text-based scholarship. Recognizing the need to include more content from the arts and humanities, the unit actively pursues special projects and visual works. The Juried Art Exhibit was an ideal opportunity to increase arts representation in ScholarWorks by

providing digital access to a library art exhibit.

The Juried Art Exhibit

Gwyn Hervochon, Librarian/Archivist, and Elaine Watson, Librarian and Liaison to the Art Department, volunteered to co-organize the Juried Art Exhibit. In the Call for Entries, they stated their intent for the exhibition: “In celebration of the role the arts play in a vibrant academic environment, Albertsons Library invites the Boise State and local communities to participate in a juried art exhibit as part of our 50th anniversary festivities” (Hervochon & Watson, 2014). Along with visibly supporting the artistic life of the campus and community, the organizers appreciated the opportunity to make new connections and serve the university’s mission to foster “community engagement, innovation and creativity” (Boise State University, 2012).

As exhibit planning started, ScholarWorks staff Amber Sherman, Librarian, and Kimberly Holling, Library Assistant, recognized the opportunity to collaborate with the exhibit organizers to increase non-text based collections in the institutional repository. The Call for Entries notified the artists that a digital representation of all accepted artwork would be added to ScholarWorks:

Albertsons Library reserves the right to photograph any entry submitted for educational, informational, or publicity purposes, and to include in ScholarWorks, the library’s online repository: <http://scholarworks.boisestate.edu/....> Artist retains full ownership of submitted artwork and allows Albertsons Library full rights to use images of work in promotion of the exhibition. (Hervochon & Watson, 2014)

The artists’ submissions served as an agreement with Albertsons Library and an acknowledgment of their acceptance of the terms stated in the Call for Entries.

In response to the Call for Entries, 50 artists submitted 93 pieces of artwork (artists could submit digital images for up to two pieces of original work). Two new Art faculty members served as jurors, and in a blind review they selected 36 works by 27 artists for the exhibit and chose five prize winners. Of the selected works, approximately 52% were from the campus community (30% students and 22% faculty or staff) and 48% were from the local community. Without a formal gallery space, Albertsons Library hosted the Juried Art Exhibit in a second floor hallway with a nearby atrium letting in natural light (Figures 1-3).



Figure 1. Juried Art Exhibit, April 2015.



Figure 2. Juried Art Exhibit, April 2015.



Figure 3. Juried Art Exhibit, April 2015.

The Juried Art Exhibit's opening reception was promoted on campus, to local arts organizations and in the *Boise Weekly*. It was planned to coincide with First Thursday--a monthly event organized by the Downtown Boise Association that includes an opportunity for people to view art exhibits in local art galleries and at the Boise Art Museum. The exhibit was on display for a month and received favorable comments from library staff, campus, and visitors. When the artists were anonymously surveyed about the exhibit, one artist expressed appreciation for the opportunity to exhibit their work: "Quality local exhibitions like Albertsons Library Juried Art Exhibit rarely exist." Another artist noted the community involvement: "...this provided an added boost to several artists's [sic] exposure in the art community and the university, and of course, the Boise community." One artist said, "I would really enjoy seeing Albertsons Library continue to have exhibitions in the future."

Digital Access in ScholarWorks

Once the physical art exhibit closed, the digital collection in ScholarWorks went live. The ScholarWorks software is not open-source and the default option for collections is for text-based documents. Despite customization limits, ScholarWorks has an 'image gallery' setting which allows for an image to be embedded on the page with customized metadata fields for text.

ScholarWorks staff created records for both community artists and Boise State-affiliated artists, using metadata from the artists' submissions. Metadata elements (Figure 4) such as artwork title, medium, and dimensions were chosen by ScholarWorks staff after reviewing the Categories for the Description of Works of Art (Getty Research Institute, 2014). The metadata was used for the artwork labels in the physical exhibit and to create one record for each artwork image in ScholarWorks (Figure 5). White and Hemmings (2010) note: "For metadata to be useful it has to be standardised but this inevitably conflicts with the need for users to have the freedom to describe their work in a meaningful way and

not feel constrained by the format” (p. 3). For example, several artworks in the Juried Art Exhibit used materials like cardboard and techniques like glass powder serigraph—details that may be missed without description. Rich description gives the viewer a better sense of the physical piece by explaining details that may not be apparent in digital representations, such as medium and dimensions.

White and Hemmings (2010) likewise discuss the limits of institutional repositories to represent non-digital art, or to create digital surrogates. Digital surrogates are not only challenging for representation in an institutional repository, but also for artists when submitting digital images to art exhibition calls. For example, some of the artists’ images in the Juried Art Exhibit did not capture the 3D elements in their artwork. Given the competitiveness of being chosen for an art exhibit, artists of non-born-digital works need to be aware that the jurors are making their initial selections using digital images, and they need to represent their work as best they can in a digital format. Four of the five prize-winning entries for the Juried Art Exhibit were born-digital photographs leading the organizers to question if the judging of digital representations favors born-digital works.

The screenshot shows the administrative interface of the bepress™ system for the Albertsons Library 50th Anniversary Juried Art Exhibition. The interface includes a top navigation bar with links like 'Manage Images', 'Add Content', 'Dashboard', 'Configuration', 'Mailing Lists', and 'My Account'. A left sidebar contains various actions such as 'Batch upload XML', 'Batch upload Excel', 'Batch revise Excel', 'Batch status', 'Collect Images', 'Manage Collection', 'Image details', 'Preview Image', 'Revise Image', 'View revisions', 'Supplemental Content', 'Remove Image', 'History', 'Administrator Notes', 'Close ir_gallery', 'Preview site', 'Update site', 'Go to site', 'Log out', and 'Administrator report'.

The main content area displays the submission details for a work titled 'Curves' by Deana Brown. The submission was published to the web on Monday, May 4, 2015. It is currently waiting for administrator approval and is not locked by the administrator. The manuscript ID is #1008. A note indicates that the status may not be accurate and suggests clicking 'Image details' to refresh.

The 'Submission Metadata' section contains the following information:

Metadata Field	Value
Title	Curves
Creator	Deana Brown
Creation Date	2015
Keywords	
Medium	photograph
Description	Dimensions: 10" x 8"
Artist's Statement	Photography forces me to be in the moment and absorb what I'm seeing. By reframing the mundane, I seek to provide a new perspective of the world around us.
Disciplines	
Rights	© Deana Brown, 2015. Photo credit: between studios.
Upload File	- empty -
Update Image	Revision

Figure 4. Screenshot of completed metadata submission in ScholarWorks (administrative view).

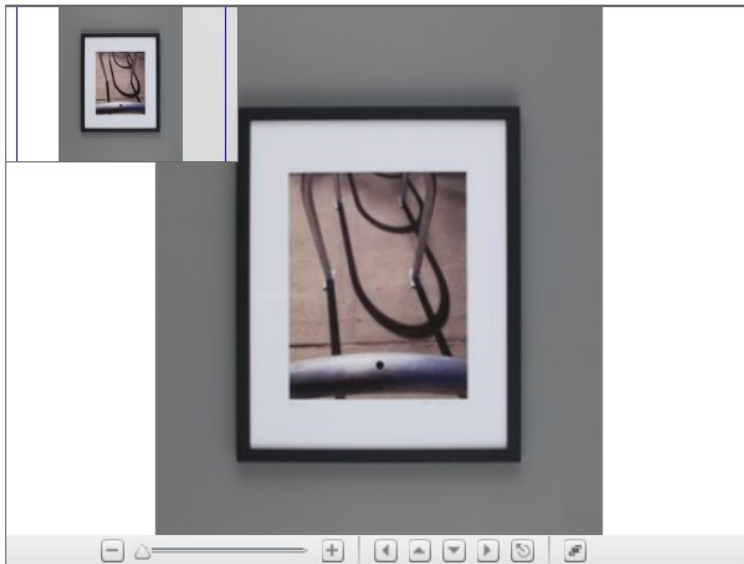
Curves

[Deana Brown](#)

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This document is currently not available here.

SHARE



Creation Date

2015

Medium

photograph

Description

Dimensions: 10" x 8"

Artist's Statement

Photography forces me to be in the moment and absorb what I'm seeing. By reframing the mundane, I seek to provide a new perspective of the world around us.

Figure 5. Screenshot of ScholarWorks record from the Juried Art Exhibit (public view).

After the records were created, ScholarWorks staff emailed the artists individually with a link to their artwork(s) to ask if any changes should be made or additional information added. Several artists requested that links to their personal or business websites be added, and one artist asked to add information about technique. Through previous collaborations with Art Department faculty, ScholarWorks staff learned that the majority of exhibit URLs are broken within a few years. Institutional repositories resolve this problem by creating permanent URLs for accessing works in its collections. In an anonymous follow-up request for feedback, artists in the Juried Art Exhibit expressed appreciation for the permanent URL: "Promotion is always helpful... promotion related to such a respected institution is even more helpful!" and "I like the permanence of this website! Thank you!! It looks very nice on my resume."

The completed ScholarWorks collection for the Juried Art Exhibit (Figure 6)--the online gallery, the call for entries and the promotional poster--was made publicly available at the close of the physical exhibit. There were over 250 page views of the collection in its first year in ScholarWorks, indicating an interest in the online exhibit. The ScholarWorks platform is search engine optimized, meaning the metadata entered into the system helps people find the artwork in a web search. By including the imag-

es, descriptive information, and artist statements from the event in the institutional repository, the artworks and the event will be permanently discoverable. This collection can be viewed at http://scholarworks.boisestate.edu/anniversary_exhibition/.

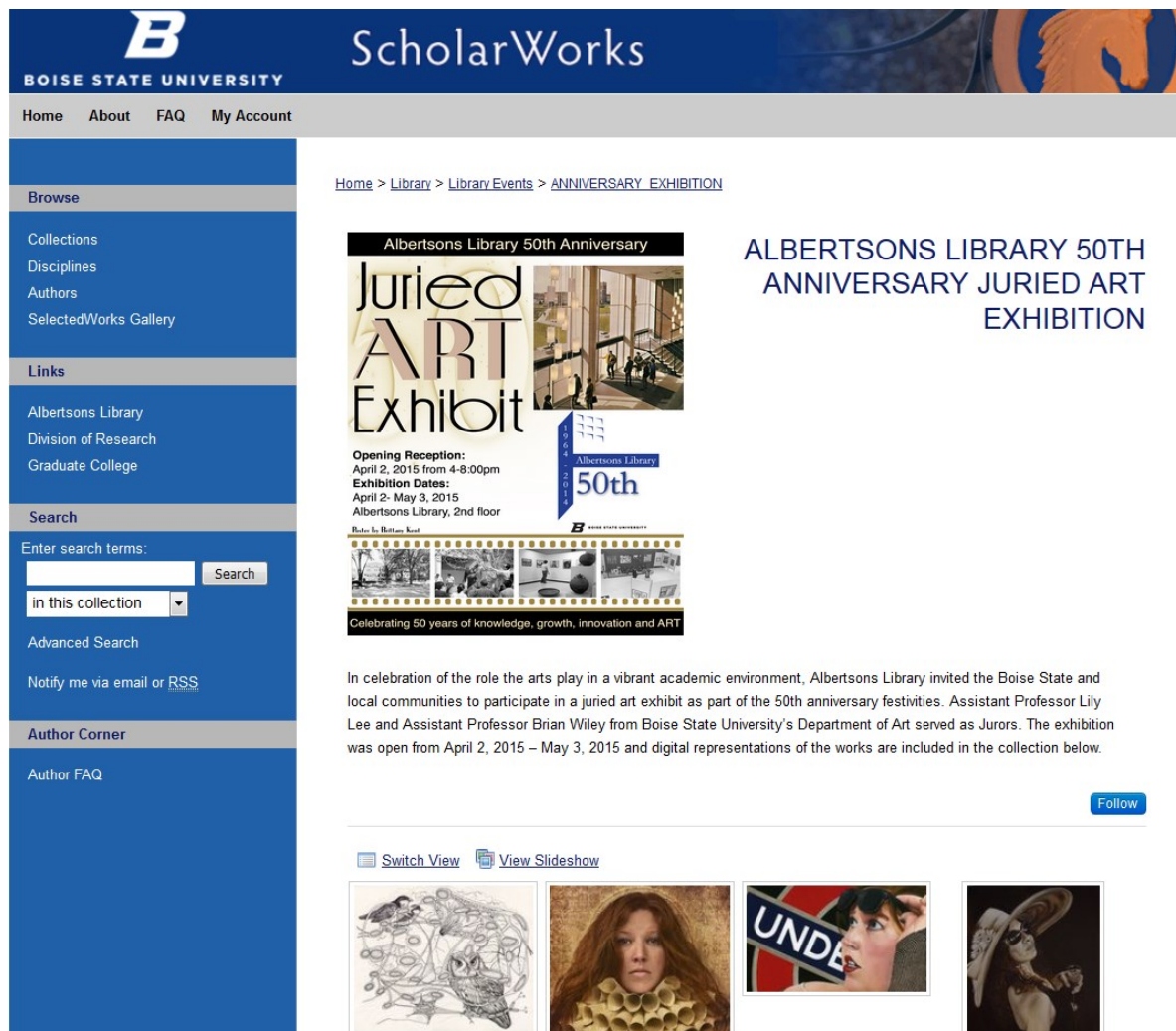


Figure 6. Screenshot of ScholarWorks landing page for the Juried Art Exhibit.

Downloading Images and Copyright Concerns

Institutional repositories operate under the open access principle, meaning works are freely available to view (and usually download) online. Tomlin notes that while faculty in the sciences are embracing open access publications, visual artists see a larger risk in displaying their works freely online (2011). Cullen and Chawner (2011) discuss a similar concern from humanities scholars who “...have on-going concerns about repositories, such as peer review, plagiarism, and intellectual property ownership” (Previous research section, para 4).

The copyright concerns of humanities scholars was echoed by artists in the Juried Art Exhibit. When the ScholarWorks collection went live, artists whose works were born-digital photographs raised concerns about the viewer’s ability to download high resolution images of the artwork. In response, staff

uploaded lower resolution images and removed the download option. In place of a download button, viewers see “This document is currently not available here” (Figure 4). People can still view the image, but do not have access to the high resolution file, limiting potential for unauthorized copying. For future online exhibits, instead of turning off the download option for the whole collection, the concern about downloading could be remedied by the inclusion of a watermark on the artwork or by asking the artists to submit a lower resolution digital image.

Best Practices

There are a number of best practices and suggestions to consider when adding a digital version of a juried art exhibit to the institutional repository:

1. In the Call for Entries, indicate that the submitted images will be included in the Library’s institutional repository if the artist’s work is accepted for the exhibit.
2. Explore an ‘image gallery’ setting available in the institutional repository and be aware there may be limited customization possible.
3. Be prepared to respond to the artists’ copyright concerns and consider options such as uploading an image with a watermark, using a lower resolution image for born-digital artwork, or turning off the download feature.
4. Use consistent metadata elements in the institutional repository such as artwork title, creation date, medium, dimensions, and the artist’s statement. This project used elements from the Categories for the Description of Works of Art (CDWA) from the Getty Institute. Another metadata schema for visual works is the VRA Core from the Visual Resources Association.
5. Send artists the permanent link to their artwork in the institutional repository.
6. Consider including photographs of the exhibition in the gallery space and promotional materials such as digital copies of the exhibit poster and postcard.
7. Market the art exhibition in the institutional repository through a campus e-newsletter and the library’s social media accounts.

Conclusion

The Albertsons Library’s 50th Anniversary Juried Art Exhibit successfully brought the campus and community together throughout the one-month exhibit and in the online collection available through ScholarWorks. Adding the artwork to ScholarWorks broadened its content and gave artists a permanent record of their work. The variety of artwork mediums in the physical exhibit highlighted the need for descriptive metadata elements to enable online viewers to appreciate the artists’ techniques. Concerns raised by the artists highlighted the need to balance copyright concerns with digital access. Hosting juried art exhibits on a regular basis is beyond the library’s resources at this time; however, the ScholarWorks unit continues to add non-text-based exhibitions from the Art Department and collections from the Theatre Department. The authors hope this article helps other libraries navigate providing digital access to art exhibits and encourages them to take on similar projects.

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