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Visual Arts in the Academic Library

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CHAPTER 7

Visual Arts in the Academic Library

JENNIFER MAYER

This chapter discusses a variety of ways that academic librarians can partner with both student and professional visual artists to encourage and support artwork in the library. Included are tips on purchasing student art, hosting temporary art exhibits in the library, hosting a library art invitational with local artists, and commissioning a permanent art piece for the library. The chapter also makes recommendations about working with facilities aspects, legal issues, and how to promote the artwork via various public relations activities.

Student Art Purchase Awards

One way to support and promote student work is to get involved with the student artists on campus, such as through shows sponsored by the university art museum or art department. If there are student shows that offer pieces for sale, create a budget so that your library can sponsor a student art purchase award, preferably every year. Presenting the award at the museum awards ceremony both recognizes student artists and gives the library visibility. At the University of Wyoming, an upper-level art student created an oil painting, which the library purchased at the 2010 student art show (fig. 1). The library has since commissioned the student artist to create a companion piece.
Student artist Gabrielle Reeves received the University of Wyoming Libraries Studies Art Purchase Award in 2010 for her oil painting *On Road*. *Photo by Nancy Marlatt*

**TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS**

If your library does not have the budget to purchase student artwork annually, consider hosting temporary exhibits and installations of student work. Talk to your art department faculty and student art organizations and offer the library as a space for temporary exhibits. Temporary installations can include both two-dimensional and three-dimensional pieces (e.g., paintings, prints, book arts, sculpture). Two University of Wyoming sculpture students collaborated to create the work shown on page 75, which is on extended loan to the library. The library can host exhibits for one or two weeks or for as long as the artist wishes to loan his or her work.

It is a good idea to contact other campus departments beyond the art department to see whether they have items they wish to loan to the library for temporary exhibition. For example, the Geology Department may have some visually appealing fossils, bone casts, rocks, or other items that would create a visually engaging and educational display. Other potential campus departments that may be interested in loaning work may include photography from the Journalism Department, the American Studies Department, or photos from departments that sponsor a study-abroad program.
Perpetuate, a collaborative work by Dakotah Konicek and Anna Konkel, is on extended loan to the Coe Library at the University of Wyoming. Photo by Nancy Marlett

In addition to student artists, local artists are important to mine for artwork in the library. A local artist could be affiliated with the university’s Art Department or other department, the university art museum, or a free agent who lives in the community. One way to encourage local artists to exhibit at the library is to host a library art invitational: form an art selection committee (appendix A provides a sample call for publications). Be flexible; allow for artists to submit work for consideration in any medium (provided that you can accommodate it) and to submit multiple pieces. After the deadline, meet with the other selection committee members to decide which works to include in the library art invitational. Notify the artists of the timeline to fill out any contractual paperwork and when they should bring the pieces to the library. A yearlong exhibit leaves enough time for the pieces to gain exposure in the building and to be enjoyed by patrons.

If the works on display will be offered for sale, include the price on the art labels, so that those who frequent your building are aware that the pieces are available for purchase. If your library has the funding, purchase some of the works from the invitational so they become part of your permanent art collection. At the conclusion of the year, pieces either can be returned to the contributing artists or picked up by the buyers, and you can start the entire process again to host the next library art invitational.
Another means of finding artwork, especially if hosting an invitational is not possible, is to visit local art galleries. Community art shows and arts-and-crafts fairs should be taken into consideration as events where art purchases can be made.

**ART COMMISSIONS**

Commissions, or contracting with an artist, are another way to bring art into the library. Funding options may include a private donor from your library board or another donor. Some states have “art in public buildings” legislation that allocates a percentage of new construction costs to purchase artwork for a state-funded facility. If your state does not offer such a program, and you are planning a new library building or renovation project, investigate setting aside an allocation from the building project for public art. Even one piece of public art makes a huge difference to the atmosphere of a building.

If you have funding options and want to investigate commissioning an artwork for your library, partner with your campus art museum or the university’s Art Department to see what contacts they have in the art world. If possible, identify and connect with a well-known regional or national artist to commission the piece. Meetings should be arranged and held at the library with the artist to discuss the library’s interests, space, and budget, and then again to view preliminary sketches and specifications of the piece. You will need to meet with your legal office to review contracts and physical plant staff to review hanging and installation logistics, if necessary. After the contracts are signed and the work is complete, you will set up the details of the installation, dates, needed equipment, and personnel. Local art students may be interested in helping install the piece if it is large and requires multiple hands. Document the installation of the piece with video and photos so you have a record of the event. Finally, host an artist talk and reception at the library—preferably in front of the piece.

**FACILITIES AND PHYSICAL SPACES**

Facilities and physical space issues are important to contemplate when installing artwork. Public collaborative spaces, quiet study spaces, reading rooms, library coffee shops, and even office suites are all appropriate possible locations to exhibit artwork. As you amass your art collection, you will be able to rotate pieces throughout the building. Remember to include wall or other labels to accompany the work with the artist’s name, title of the piece, year,
Sculpture students help artist James Surls with the installation of Rolling Flower, which was commissioned by the University of Wyoming Libraries in 2009. *Photo by Nancy Marlatt*

and any other relevant information, such as purchase award year if applicable. For installations, ask the artist to include a one-page artist statement to be posted close to the work. Depending on your university's or college's policies, you may incur costs from the physical plant to hang artwork or to patch and paint walls after temporary exhibits, so plan to budget for that expense if needed.

Another option for art in the library is to host rotating photography exhibits. You first need to identify a large wall space and to purchase and install a hanging rail system to be able to easily change out exhibits. In addition to hosting the exhibit, offer a library space for the photographer to give a public talk about his or her work. Other possibilities for rotating display space include movable panels. Display cases may be difficult to work with, as items would have to fit in a fixed sized space, and the work is not as accessible to the viewers.

**LEGALITIES**

The legal aspects of exhibiting and purchasing art are an involved and important part of the process. The first step is to create an art exhibit guidelines
document for sharing with interested artists. A guidelines document example appears in appendix B. The guidelines document may include the following:

- Library space available for exhibits
- Selection process policy
- Exhibition procedures, such as who is responsible for the transport of work, whether lenders must sign a risk waiver, who is responsible for the delivery, the installation and deinstallation (your university may have a policy that indicates the university's physical plant must do this work)
- Promotion

A necessary companion document to the guidelines is a legally binding loan agreement, such as the art loan agreement, release, assumption of risk and waiver of liability, which is provided in appendix C. If your university does not already have a form available for this purpose, you will need to create one and have it approved by your university's legal office. A legally approved waiver signed by the lending artist will absolve the library of any legal and financial implications should the loaned artwork be stolen or otherwise damaged. It is vital that lending artists sign the waiver; but in my experience, no work has been stolen or damaged during several years of hosting art in our library. If you are concerned about theft, talk to your physical plant staff about secure ways to hang works, or put a book security strip on the back of the artwork.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Promoting art in the library is a crucial part of the public relations process; otherwise, people who do not frequent your building will not know about your art collection and exhibits. Avenues to entice outside audiences include the usual places where your library conducts promotion, such as in your library's blog, newsletter, or social networking sites. Contact local nonprofit art organizations, tourism boards, or visitors' centers, as they often create community art maps, and you will want to ensure that your library is listed as an art destination. Offer art tours in the library to interested classes and to campus and community boards and groups. Your campus and local newspapers are other outlets for articles and photos to increase awareness about the art in your library.

There are other ways to promote the art in the library. You might interview artists from whom you purchase work, and make streaming audio and video
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interviews available on your website, with the artists’ permission. Another way to promote art from within the library is to use cell-phone audio tours. For a minimal fee, you can contract with a company that provides this service. You record your own messages about the artwork, from either your office or your personal phone. Once your message prompts are complete and activated, you need to create signage that provides art viewers with a number to call on their phones to listen to your recorded message about each piece. Cell-phone audio tours are frequently used in art museums, and they are a quick and easy way for interested patrons to learn more about the art in your library.

Finally, an attractive “art in the library” web page or blog that showcases images of the artwork in the library, along with a map of where the artwork can be found, is helpful in a number of ways. The University of Wyoming’s Art in the Libraries site (http://uwlib5.uwyo.edu/blogs/libarts/) is one example of this type of web page. An interactive web page of your library art is useful to patrons, so they get an overview of what you have and where it is, and they know where they can go to experience the art in person. Faculty may want to use an “art in the library” website to support a class exercise related to art or images. Also, an art website is helpful since it serves as an attractive inventory of all the library’s artwork.

Think of who you can partner with to make art in your library a reality: the campus Art Department, the university art museum, student groups, the library administration, a special projects librarian or other colleague, and local artists and gallery owners are all potentially valuable partners. Hosting exhibits and related talks sponsored by various departments and programs on campus builds relationships. Art is a way to connect students, the university, and the community at large to the library.
APPENDIX A

COE LIBRARY ART INVITATIONAL
The University of Wyoming Libraries are seeking proposals for pieces of art to be loaned to William Robertson Coe Library, the flagship library of the University of Wyoming. Recently remodeled and expanded to more than 250,000 square feet, Coe Library offers artists the opportunity to place their work in a very visible, significant building in the heart of the UW campus. Coe Library is a dynamic center for students, faculty, and visitors to campus, and records more than 440,000 visits each year.

ARTIST SCOPE OF THE COE LIBRARY ART INVITATIONAL
This invitational is limited to established local artists.

SUBJECT SCOPE OF THE COE LIBRARY ART INVITATIONAL
Subject matter should have a general appeal to all ages and backgrounds. Artists should also understand that Coe Library is a public facility and not an art museum.

DURATION OF LOAN FOR THE COE LIBRARY ART INVITATIONAL
UW Libraries request a twelve-month loan period for each accepted piece, with the option of a twelve-month renewal after the initial year. Accepted loaned pieces must be on display in Coe Library no later than August 20, 2010.

INSTALLATION DATES FOR THE COE LIBRARY ART INVITATIONAL
UW Libraries would like any accepted loaned pieces to be installed from August 1, 2010, to August 20, 2010. This installation date allows both artists and UW Libraries to have the loaned pieces on display before the UW Fall Semester begins. UW takes responsibility for hanging the art, but the artist is responsible for physically delivering his or her piece(s) to Coe Library.

TERMS OF SALE DURING THE COE LIBRARY ART INVITATIONAL
Ideally, UW Libraries request that all loaned pieces remain on display in Coe Library for the entire year. After six months, the artist has the opportunity to sell any loaned piece during the invitational, giving UW Libraries first right of refusal. Artists should arrange a predetermined price with UW Libraries, in the event UW Libraries wish to purchase the piece. Since no commission would be involved with these loaned pieces, UW Libraries would expect a price reflecting that discount.

RISK MANAGEMENT FOR LOANED PIECES DURING THE COE LIBRARY ART INVITATIONAL
Unless the artist has elected to maintain his/her own insurance, the university will insure pieces wall-to-wall under its Risk Management Policy. See the CONDITIONS STATEMENT for limitations and details.
TO SUBMIT A PROPOSAL OR FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
Proposals should be submitted by July 1, 2010, and must include all of the following:

- artist name
- medium
- size/dimensions of piece(s)
- title of piece(s)
- year of creation for piece(s)
- cost of piece(s)
- images of piece(s) proposed for Coe Library Art Invitational

Artists are encouraged to contact UW Libraries prior to submitting a proposal. To submit proposals or to request additional information, please contact University of Wyoming Libraries Administration, care of David Kruger. David can be reached via phone (307) 399–7347 or email tseliot@uwyo.edu.

Selections for the Coe Library Art Invitational will be announced by July 15, 2010.

PROSPECTIVE SPACES FOR LOANED PIECES

GRAND STAIRWELL: LEVEL 1
- Base area at the foot of these steps would nicely accommodate a sculpted piece. This is a high-traffic stairwell.

SIDE WALL, MAIN CORRIDOR CENTRAL: LEVEL 2 [MAIN FLOOR]
- This broad corridor wall leads from the new building to the Alma Doke McMurry Reading Room on the west end of Coe Library. It has some visibility from the rotunda in the new building.

END WALL, MAIN CORRIDOR WEST: LEVEL 2 [MAIN FLOOR]
- This dark wall in the west building lies at the end of the main corridor and is visible from the rotunda in the new building.

SIDE WALL, MAIN CORRIDOR WEST: LEVEL 2 [MAIN FLOOR]
- This light wall is located just outside the Alma Doke McMurry Reading Room.

ILLUMINATION STAIRWELL, LEVEL 3
- Located near the IT lab balcony, this area also features ceiling illuminations that flow through multiple colors. Walls are a metallic blue.

Additional locations are also available. Consult UW Libraries for further information.
APPENDIX B

The University Libraries supports hosting art exhibits by University of Wyoming students, faculty, and staff. The artists gain a visible location on campus to display their work, and the Libraries benefit in aesthetic terms.

SPACE
- Wall space is available, as well as some display cases (measurements = 60” long, 28” wide, 6” tall) which are also used for library displays. Floor space and a modular cube display are additional options.

SELECTION PROCESS
- The Libraries reserve the right to decline the display of any proposed artwork without cause.

EXHIBITION PROCEDURES
- The lending artist (lender) is responsible for the transport of the artwork(s) to and from the Libraries. Please include signage for each artwork (artist’s name, title and date of the work, and artist’s statements are welcome).
- The lender will be consulted regarding where the art will be displayed, and the lender will provide an inventory of works of art to be displayed. The Libraries will determine the final exhibit location.
- The artwork will be displayed for a finite, negotiable amount of time. Items will remain on display for the entire exhibition period.
- The university physical plant will mount wall-hanging exhibits (UW Regulation 2-178).
- More than one artist's work(s) may be exhibited at the same time, depending on available space.
- Lenders must sign the risk waiver before works may be exhibited.

PUBLICITY
- The library will promote exhibits, for example, on the library website or in the newsletter.
- The lender (and professor) is encouraged to publicize the exhibit.

CONTACT INFORMATION
For questions or further information:
Jennifer Mayer, 766-5578, mayerj@uwyo.edu, Fine Arts Reference Librarian
1/19/00, rev. 1/13/06 jm
APPENDIX C: ART LOAN AGREEMENT, RELEASE, ASSUMPTION OF RISK, AND WAIVER OF LIABILITY

UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING LIBRARIES

This agreement and Assumption of Risk is made this _____day of ____, 20__, by and between the University of Wyoming Libraries and ______________________ (Lender).

1. The lender wishes to loan to the UW Libraries the following works of art:

__________________________________________ to be exhibited in accordance with the UW Libraries' Art Exhibit Guidelines for a period of _____, starting ____________ and ending ____________.

2. The Lender understands and agrees that his/her works of art are loaned and will be exhibited at his/her own risk and that the UW Libraries, University of Wyoming, its employees and volunteers shall not be responsible for theft, vandalism, fire or other damage to the works of art.

3. In consideration of being allowed to loan works of art to the UW Libraries and have said works of art exhibited, the Lender hereby assumes all risks associated with the loaning and exhibiting of Lender's works of art and agrees to hold the University of Wyoming, its trustees, employees and volunteers harmless from any and all liability, actions, causes of action, debts, claims, or demands of any kind and nature whatsoever which may arise by or in connection with the loaning and exhibiting of Lender's works of art. The terms hereof shall serve as a release and assumption of risk by the Lender, heirs, estate, executor, administrator, assignees and for all members of Lender's family. I understand and agree to the above Agreement, Assumption of Risk and Waiver of Liability and I have read the UW Libraries Art Exhibit Guidelines.

__________________________ __________________________
Date Printed name of Lender

Signature of Lender
1/18/00jm