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Art Across the Curriculum

Origins of the term museum lay in the ancient Greek word for the abode of the muses, or the nine sisters who were the offspring of Zeus and Mnemosyne (memory). As the children of Memory, the muses are closely associated with the act of thinking and remembering, essential aspects in the process of learning and creativity. (Lowry 2004, 139)

“Art museums in general are looking to education... education programs are growing,” stated an academic curator. She identified two probable reasons: As art programs are slashed in public schools, art museums try to ensure that children still receive some exposure to art; and academic art museums increasingly seek greater participation in the curriculum on their own campuses. The museums in this study are indeed working with public schools and also engaging in innovative ways with the academic life of their institutions. This report focuses on academic involvement—on the acts of experiencing and learning, thinking and creativity—enabled by campus art museums. It is divided into seven sections: Attracting Faculty to the Campus Art Museum; Meeting Course Objectives through the Art Museum; Collaborations among Museum Staff and Faculty; Museum Exhibitions and their Integration into Classes and Research; Foundation Support for Academic Integration of Art across the Curriculum; A Town/Gown Divide?; and The Power of the Original.

Efforts by campus art museums to integrate art into the curriculum of colleges and universities are somewhat new. Before the 1940s, art history or fine arts departments often had resource centers that housed art collections, including photo collections and slide libraries. These collections were primarily for use by arts faculty in research and teaching (Bradley 2009, 1). The era following the 1940s saw a drastic rise in the number of art museums on campuses, with an emphasis placed on acquiring valuable collections. These museums also began expanding their missions to serve K-12 students in public schools, becoming “the community museum on a college campus” (Bradley 2009, 1). By reaching out into the community, museums obtained both community support and funds.

Education as a mission of the museum received a boost during the turbulent 1960s when public and private funding sources began demanding that museums attend to their role in promoting social consciousness (Williams 2007). Campus museums became even more community-focused, adopted professional standards and practices, and sought to separate themselves from departmental politics, becoming somewhat autonomous units on campus. The Tax Reform Act of

1. Data for this document come from the Allen Memorial Art Museum at Oberlin College; Indiana University Art Museum; Snite Museum of Art at Notre Dame University; David and Alfred Smart Museum at University of Chicago; the University of Arizona Museum of Art; the Spencer Museum of Art at the University of Kansas; and the University of Missouri Museum of Art and Archaeology. The site selection process involved “extreme case” sampling in that campus art museums that had received Kress Collections (twenty-three) were asked to self-identify as exemplary of what campus art museums at their best could be, and to submit evidence if interested in participating in the study. With the resulting pool, maximum variation sampling was used to select cases that varied widely on indicators such as private/public institutions, large/small campus populations, rural/urban locations, and recipient or not of the Mellon Foundation’s College and University Art Museum Program multi-year grants.
1969, enabling government support for public institutions that were educational, provided further incentive for museums to embrace outreach to public schools. The economic downturn of the 1980s contributed to an even greater focus on education. Museums turned “from adding to their collections to increasing educational services and programs for the public” (Williams 2007, 59).

The change from a collections-driven to an education-centered museum has had significant consequences for how museums represent themselves. “The collection holdings are no longer viewed as the primary measure of value for a museum; rather, the relevant and effective role of the museum in service to the public has become the core measuring stick” (Anderson 2004, 4). Nonetheless, even in the first decade of the twenty-first century this educational outreach was more to the community and its schools than to students in non-art disciplines at the college or university (Bradley 2009). Signs indicate, however, that the art museum is once again becoming a site of teaching and research on college and university campuses, but this time, not for art departments alone. “Campus museums may become privileged places for pedagogical innovation,” states Bradley (2009, 2). She continues, “success requires flexibility and resources” (2009, 2). This report seeks to address ways in which these pedagogical innovations are taking place, with and without extra funding.

At Oberlin College, a literature professor reflected on his use of the Allen Memorial Art Museum (AMAM) as a classroom:

The museum as a classroom is a wonderful resource for dialogue and finding multiple points of view…. I just love the museum as a place where you bust up the formality and the stodginess of the classroom…. I use it for my Shakespeare classes now.

An art history professor there described the museum as “an integral part of the curriculum:"

I think what is happening now is that people are using the museum in ways that have become so deeply entwined into the curriculum and not just humanities but also social sciences and sciences… that it’s just becoming an integral part of the curriculum – for a physics person to talk about light, color, and vision using an impressionist painting; for an historian to come over and analyze the psychology of how you present art in the museum and the politics of collecting and politics of label writing. Frankly, right now we could use a couple more [academic curators] and a couple more rooms to study things in. You can’t turn the faucet off now.

Although the above quotations are in reference to the AMAM, similar testimonies describe other campuses where focused attention and effort is directed at integrating the art museum into the academic life of the campus. The AMAM works with nearly every department at Oberlin, around thirty-nine departments. They had 142 class visits from nineteen different departments during the 2010-11 academic year, and the museum was not even open due to renovations. The “visits” took place in a study room in the library where relevant works of art were displayed. The usual number of class visits (when the museum is open) is between
220 and 240 a year. At Indiana University (IU), a much larger school, the Indiana University Art Museum (IUAM) provides curriculum-structured gallery programs that reach an estimated 8,000 university students each year. Museums are being used to such an extent that some struggle with how to meet the demand:

“Our problem now is we’ve become a victim of our own success. [AMAM]"

“[Pulling people in] was so successful, I had to stop advertising. [IUAM]"

Demand, however, is a good problem, demonstrating the integral role of the campus art museum as an active partner and resource in academic programs at universities and colleges. The following section discusses how campus art museums and faculty find each other.

**Attracting Faculty to the Campus Art Museum**

In the quotation to the left, a professor is describing the role of the academic curator, whose primary responsibility is to connect faculty throughout the college/university with the museum. Five of the seven museums in the study are fortunate to have someone in this position, as well as a museum educator. More typically, an academic art museum has only a museum educator who works simultaneously with public schools, the community, faculty, and students on campus. Whether academic or education curators, museum personnel tend to employ various forms of outreach to engage faculty in academic uses of the museum, as discussed below.

**New Faculty Outreach**

Most colleges and universities welcome new faculty to the campus through an orientation program that, among other things, introduces resources on campus. Some campus art museums work closely with those responsible for faculty orientation and a visit to the campus art museum is included in the program. Ideally, the visit is more than a simple tour. Several of the campus art museums in the study organize workshops on academic uses of the museum for the orientation program, as described by an academic curator:

“...how do we get the museum to not just be a playroom of the art department, which is a given, how do we teach other people to use it too?”

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2. This position is also referred to as academic coordinator, curator of academic programs, director of academic programs, academic officer, and more. This report tends to use the term academic curator to refer to the person whose primary role is to link the museum with faculty and students on campus. A later section discusses the role of the Mellon Foundation in creating a cadre of academic curators.

3. Museums with academic curators included the AMAM, IUAM, the Smart, and the Spencer. The MU Museum of Art and Archaeology employed a half-time academic coordinator.

4. This position is variously titled curator of education, education curator, education director, or museum educator. These terms are used interchangeably in this report.
Everyone spends an afternoon at the museum with an introduction to the collection and also the various models that the museum and faculty use, the pedagogical models for teaching with art. I invited several faculty who had very successfully used the collection to tell about their own experiences. They shared their experiences and I also presented on five different models of teaching with art at the [campus art museum]. We had forty-five new faculty partake and I knew what departments they were coming from so I picked my examples from fields that could be relevant to what they are teaching. I gave them some minutes to think about how they might use the collection and to share this information with each other. A lot of them ended up making appointments to use the collection this semester.

Professors testify to the value of orientation workshops. A music professor reflected, "We had had as part of the new faculty orientation, one or two sessions on using the museum... and so with my own experience and with that as impetus, we got in there right away. I basically take every class I teach to the museum at least once during a semester, almost regardless of the class." Similarly, a language professor at another institution stated that since the new faculty orientation, "I have brought every class I’ve taught to the museum." She now helps educate new faculty about using the museum in their courses.

Publications

Publications help connect faculty and museums. Some museums provide printed information about services available through the museum as well as examples of academic uses to get professors thinking about how they might use the museum to complement and further instructional goals. For example, the AMAM published a booklet for faculty on teaching through the museum (Milkova 2011). Museum curators and educators also develop various forms of teacher packets that can be used by faculty, public school teachers, and docents.

At some institutions, articles by professors on how they use the art museum encourage others to do so as well. “The museum has a bulletin and the curator asked [colleagues] to write articles on how they used the museum in their teaching,” stated an area studies professor. She continued, “I still go back and use that issue of their bulletin to get tips about objects they had used in class and things that are relevant to our curriculum.”

Informal publications can also link museum personnel and faculty by sharing their scholarship and experiences, particularly for those new to campus. Curators tend to have specific historical and geographical expertise and often find second homes in other campus units such as African Studies or European History. Publications can help make faculty aware of curators whose knowledge complements their own work, as described by an academic curator:

Our own museum newsletter had a spread on me and a couple other new hires... and I think just the word spreads... Because of my background in Soviet and Russian art, the Russian Department was super excited to have me here, to
have an ally in the museum. There was nobody there who does Russian art so they saw me as a new contribution to their department, not just as a museum person.

Emails/Letters Targeting Specific Courses

Academic and education curators strategically consider which academic programs and courses might best be served by the museum’s collections and use targeted emails or letters to inform deans, department chairs, faculty, and discussion leaders of the museum’s resources. The following quotations describe this process. The first is from the IUAM and the second is from the David and Alfred Smart Museum (Smart):

I have just done a massive email outreach to all faculty teaching in the spring, I think the subject line was “Let us design a gallery session for your course next semester.” It tells them what a curriculum-structured gallery program is, which is a gallery session led by our staff... that we design based on the collections around the professor’s curriculum. Generally, they send me a syllabus. I talk to them either in person or with a couple of emails about their course themes and ideas. Often I write back with a list of possible art works to cover and what I’m envisioning. And generally they write back, “Sounds great, we’ll be there.”

There’s something at the University of Chicago called the core curriculum and we use that, particularly the humanity core sequences that many first-year students take.... I’ve reached out to those instructors because these are courses that are taught in sixteen to eighteen sections in any given quarter.... So we started focusing on the humanities and reaching out to those instructors and inviting them to send us syllabi or let us know what themes they are teaching and [we began] thinking about ways we could connect the collection to those themes. We made specific proposals for the classes, object packages that they might consider.... This is getting some momentum, so this is now the second or third year for some of the sequences.... More recently we’ve reached out to social sciences as well.

Academic curators and museum educators, particularly at large institutions, tend to focus on introductory courses that all first-year students take, such as composition seminars. Languages, literature, anthropology, and art education are other popular areas, but the reach extends beyond these courses. As described by an academic curator, museum personnel try “to establish a long-term relationship with certain departments or professors for those really large classes” so that particular gallery sessions can be developed and used year after year.

Student Docents/Liaisons

Campus art museums that prepare students to serve as docents, create, in the process, a valuable link between the museum and academic courses. As the students become familiar with the museum’s resources, they make suggestions to
professors about using the museum and sometimes put together a specialized tour for the class as an education curator relates:

*If there are student docents majoring in areas, especially outside of the arts, and they come up with their own ideas for a potential tour or way to do a class then we let them take a lead on that with professors. We’ve had... a tour for a French class and... a fantastic astronomy show... We’ve had students do feminist philosophy and neuroscience.*

Student docents sometimes take part in the museum’s talk series or gallery presentations, perhaps discussing a work of art in the collection that they have researched. Friends of the student, who may not be that familiar with the museum, are likely to attend the talk as noted by a music professor. “Docent talks are wonderful, especially in that it helps bringing in students or colleagues that don’t go to the museum.” Museums also create student advisory councils or boards whose role, in part, is to link the museum with professors and classes.

**Committees, Meetings, and Course Development Grants**

Some art museums strategically include faculty on museum committees, thus informing more people about the work and challenges of the museum while spreading the support base. An area studies director found his involvement rewarding: “We’ve worked a lot with the museum in a personal way and an organizational way. I’m on the acquisitions committee, so for me that’s really nice because I get to see lovely objects once or twice a month.” Through a series of luncheons, the Smart brings people from across the curriculum together to discuss ways in which their research, scholarship, and expertise can be brought to bear on special exhibitions.

Some campus art museums are also able to offer modest grants for faculty “to work on a research initiative or to teach using the collection more effectively.” Professors who receive such grants often spend the summer working with objects in the museum’s collection that are of interest to them for teaching or research. For example, a literature professor received a grant to explore his interest in relations among poets, their subject matter, and art from the same geographic locations and time periods.

**Personal Outreach and Connections**

Personal outreach by museum staff seems to be a particularly effective strategy for getting faculty who may be unfamiliar with the art world to consider whether they too could use the museum in their courses. This outreach tends to happen in everyday conversations as in this connection between a biology professor and a museum director:

> “It becomes a matter of building personal connections so I try to show up at university events .... I just talk to people who seem interested and I try to find venues that will allow me to do that.”

Academic Coordinator

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5. Although tour appears to be the word most frequently used for curator, educator, or docent-led museum programs, some museums take issue with the connotations of the word and have created other descriptors such as curriculum-structured gallery program, used at the IUAM.
I teach in biology and I arrived here in 1996 and started using the museum around 2006. It was at the time that [the current director] arrived. I feel very uncultured. I probably don’t go to a museum as often as I should. I find it very interesting and attractive, but I just don’t have the background or training to take much from it. But in just chatting with [the director], I had some ideas and she wanted to explore the holdings since she had just arrived on campus at that time and there was a synergy and we came up with a particular project that would fit well with what my students were learning... [It all began because] we were just sitting down at lunch or dinner sometime and just chatting. “Wouldn’t it be fun if you came to the museum,” she probably said. And I said, “Well, what would I do?” And she, “What are you studying?” And it was just this playing around with ideas.

Faculty in other departments had similar stories. For example, a business professor relayed,

I first met [museum personnel] at a reception.... It was given by one of my neighbors. They invited me and it was part of the Mellon Challenge Grant to educate the community both about the grant challenge and about the program to implement art throughout the curriculum.... I got to meet lots of people involved in the art community and in the... community. So through that meeting, [the academic curator] arranged a meeting with me where we sat and mapped out some of the different ideas I had about how we could work together and I feel like I gave her a grocery list and she filled all my orders.

How these professors and others actually use the museum in their classes is discussed next.

Meeting Course Objectives through the Art Museum

Thirty-seven professors were interviewed as part of this research. Seventeen are in art-related disciplines and twenty are from other areas of study. These faculty, in conjunction with museum staff, use art and the art museum in multiple ways in their classes. Their practices suggest six learning objectives that the museum helps fulfill: skill development, interdisciplinary analysis, comparative analysis, social critique, research, and creative inspiration. Because these objectives are not always as distinct as they might at first appear, I am using them to loosely group and discuss ways in which the museum is incorporated into academic courses. 6

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6. Milkova (2011) organizes use of the museum by faculty into five categories or models: visual literacy, art as cultural context, art as conceptual framework, art as primary text, and art as creative focal point.
Skill Development

“Que significado los numerals?” asked the dark-haired docent who, as a sophomore at the University of Notre Dame, was around the same age as the students in the Spanish class she was leading around the gallery in the Snite Museum of Art. It was her first tour as a docent and although a bit nervous, she gradually got the students to feel comfortable in responding in Spanish to her questions and then posing questions themselves. The students carried small folding stools that they opened to sit in front of paintings by various artists from the Spanish-speaking Americas. Her question about the significance of the numbers in a painting by Joaquín Torres García led to a discussion of math and art as universal languages. She got students to talk about emotions, symbols, and historical connections evoked by the art. Before a painting by José Bedia, students became animated as they saw layers of symbolism in the picture, guided by the docent’s words. The students freely volunteered their interpretations—all in Spanish. The class lasted an hour before the students quietly filed out of the gallery, chatting with each other in English. (fieldnotes)

Language classes find a natural fit with the museum. Generally, students visit works created by artists whose first language is the same as that being studied. Classes may be facilitated by the professor or by a docent or curator who can do so in the language of the course (including sign language). Language professors often assign essays on a work of art, written in the studied language, following a gallery tour. An advanced language class may collaborate with the museum on projects that allow students to perfect language skills while providing something useful for the museum. An example is when students translated text into Italian for a dual-language catalogue on Italian art for the Snite Museum of Art (Snite).

Professors in the arts and museum studies frequently use the campus museum as a venue for students to practice skills. Arts faculty, for example, may request to have objects appropriate for a class pulled from storage and displayed in a print study room (if the museum has one). Ideally, objects are left up for a period of time so students can work on developing their visual literacy skills through various assignments? The following table presents a few more examples of art museum use for skill development in the arts and museum studies.

7. For more information on campus art museum study centers, see the report by Tishman, McKinney, and Straughn (2007) based on research at the Harvard Art Museum’s study centers.
Table 11.1. Examples of How Professors in the Arts and Museum Studies Use Campus Art Museums to Help Students Develop Specific Skills

Crafting Museum Labels
“Probably the most comprehensive use of the museum was a course I did this past summer called ‘Greek Vases in the [campus art museum]’…. We’d have one day of lecture and one day in the museum and then one day of lecture and one day in the museum and this went on for the six weeks…. We would cover a particular area and then we’d go in and apply that knowledge in some fashion to the museum collection. Each student had what I call their special days and each student was responsible for working on their special days throughout the duration of the course. There were four short essays about some aspect of their vase, what it looked like, how it was produced, pictures on it, the iconography of it. They’d have to do some research and the final product was to write a new museum label. So the idea was for them to take all that material and to synthesize it into something that had them make some choices about what they thought were the most important features of their vessel.” (art history professor)

Selecting New Acquisitions
“One of my favorite assignments is to ask students to go to the collection and look around. Then I pull out a whole bunch of Sotheby’s and Christie’s catalogues from recent sales and I ask them to select a piece—[to pretend] that an anonymous donor has agreed to purchase anything in the world for the [campus art museum]—to select from these catalogues which they would purchase and why. So the idea is that they have to look at the collection and think about its scope and add something to the collection that would either fill a hole or expand upon an existing strength. They have to write about why they would select that, where they would display it, and, in a sense, justify that donation. It’s a way of getting them to think about the collection as a curator would in a synthetic way. It’s one of my favorite paper assignments and the students tend to do very well with it.” (art history professor)

Practicing Artistic Techniques
“We look at master drawings in digital form, projected, all semester long, and at models. I usually leave the [campus art museum] to last]…. There they get to copy from master drawings, right there in front of them. They could reach out and touch them. The students absolutely love that assignment and as part of the requirements for the class, I have them turn in a portfolio and ask them to frame one drawing…. I would say about half the class chooses to frame their copy of the master drawing and I know they keep that forever.” (studio arts professor)

Professors in the arts find that they make impromptu use of the campus museum in their classes as well, as a studio art professor describes:

In my painting classes, I’m always sure to bring my students through here whenever somebody in class might be struggling with some kind of technical aspect. You know, like “I don’t know how to do hair.” And I say, “OK, let’s come over to the [campus art museum].” There are lots of examples and people really learn by actually looking at the paintings. You can see it in a way that you just cannot in reproductions...all of the surface qualities.... It’s really pretty terrific having this museum here and being able to just run over, look at something, and then go back.

Art education professors incorporate the campus art museum into general education classes with a focus on practicing pedagogical skills in a new context. They may, for example, group students with docents to learn about working with children in the museum. An art education professor describes how this gets some students into the art museum for the first time:

You’ll have these young adults in the class and many of them have never visited a museum, let alone the museum that’s on their own campus. So, we often make a point of taking those groups over to the museum.... Here they have what they call the Second Grade Tour.... Our students walk through the museum with a docent... [who takes] them through the same tour that the second graders would experience. The docents talk about how they engage them, they
talk about the objects, and they tell all kinds of stories about how the children respond. They have students thinking about how could they make connections between these objects and their curriculum, how can they make a link between this still life and science or math or all of the things they have to teach.

Courses in languages, museum studies, art education, and the arts are not the only ones to use the museum as a way to practice disciplinary skills; others do so as well. A pharmacology professor made use of a collection of photographs of HIV patients to get students to practice medical observation skills. An algebra class spent time at a Frank Lloyd Wright house, affiliated with the museum, doing algebra assignments to work out aspects of the design and construction of the house. And music classes often link with the museum to practice their playing and provide concerts during an art opening or other special events.

Interdisciplinary Analysis

Interdisciplinary use of the museum—crossing disciplinary boundaries and connecting diverse schools of thought—contributes to new understandings. Of those interviewed, music and literature professors most often used the campus art museum in cross-disciplinary ways, but others did so as well. This section describes how interdisciplinary analysis may take place.

Art works well to complement and extend the concepts music professors tend to teach. One professor, for example, annually rotates his geographical focus in his course on historical musical performances. Each year, he takes students to the print study room where a curator displays works corresponding to the era and location of the performances. Together the group analyzes what is happening visually and musically and how each informs the other. A student reflected on how a professor with a similar approach got them to think about music history through assignments that required visits to the campus art museum:

I took both a Medieval-Renaissance class and a Baroque Music History class... and two of our papers, graded assignments, were to go over to the museum and look at specific works chosen by the professor... He’d pick a work, such as a Medieval work, and he’d say, “Go to the [campus art museum], look at this work, and think about all you’ve learned in music history about the overarching style of the Medieval period.... How does it relate to the piece of art that you’re looking at?” We had to write a two-page paper about it. Initially, everybody’s reaction was, “I don’t want to do this, I don’t want to go to the museum.” And it turned out to be everybody’s favorite assignment. People take more classes with him. They take the Medieval-Renaissance class and then they take the Baroque class and they see the assignment again and they go, “Yeah, the museum piece.” Everyone gets really excited about that one. It’s not that difficult, particularly because there are so many parallels between music and art, and that’s what you’re supposed to learn. It’s an enjoyable exercise because you already have

8. Alexa Miller, an arts learning specialist, draws attention to combining visual arts and medical training through her work to improve Harvard Medical students’ observation and diagnostic skills in a time of increased reliance on technology. See Kowalcyk 2008.
so much intrinsic knowledge about the art... because of the music class. You go over to the art museum and you see this work and think, “I play trombone, I don't know anything about Baroque art,” but you do because of the class.

Another music professor gets his students to better understand the concepts of sublime and beautiful though use of the campus art museum:

*I talked [with a colleague] about my Beethoven class that I was teaching that semester and we were talking about the sublime and the beautiful and he said, “Well, we've got all these Hogarth prints, we've got all these other prints that could basically illustrate some of that.” ...So that was my first time using the art museum in the class. I brought the Beethoven class over to see these prints which were up in the print room for one class period, and it was great – that, and every other experience since. When we go into the art museum, people who didn’t talk in class before suddenly open up in new ways. That’s one of the reasons I find it such an incredible pedagogical tool. You get points of view in the classroom that you didn’t have before. It gets them out of their comfort zone of sitting behind a desk, and also usually interrupts a sense of lassitude that can sometimes come into a class when the same six or seven people are talking all the time.*

Through combining works of art and music, these professors got students to think about both fields in richer, more profound ways.

Professors of other humanities and social sciences courses use the art museum similarly to music professors. They ask curators for works of art about a particular place and/or period of time to analyze alongside disciplinary writings. A literature professor teaching “The Lure of the New” focused on English literature related to the colonization of the Americas and Africa. The curator pulled works on paper from these periods and locations for the classes. A professor who teaches about Japanese history brought her class to the museum to study Japanese historical prints. A history professor, teaching a class on popular religion in Mexico, assigned Dante’s Inferno, and then took students to the campus art museum to look at Spanish religious art from the time of colonization of Mexico to analyze how historical writings and visual art inform each other. In all of these situations, concepts of one discipline are expanded, deepened, or perceived in new ways through the inclusion of art.

A business professor provides yet more examples of interdisciplinary uses of the campus art museum. Describing a graduate course for students who have “wanted to be tax people their whole lives,” she said, “I gave them the client of the [campus art museum] and... they did research for about a month on not-for-profit accounting, the not-for-profit tax return, and rules for charitable giving.” As a result of what they learned, students gave a workshop for museum staff and interested graduate students. This professor has also connected with an art history professor to team-teach a “Business of Art” course, cross-listed under business management and art history. She stated,
We’ve got kids from all over campus who normally don’t talk to each other. We’ve got art history, we’ve got artists, we’ve got business students, we have architecture students, and we have an economist. We are focusing on the contemporary art market... and talk about museums, of course, galleries, auctions, artists, collectors, dealers, art as an investment, the tax rules related to art, the nuts and bolts of the business.

By the museum becoming part of their classes, business concepts became real and more interesting for students. Interdisciplinary analysis as used here refers to examining a concept or process through several disciplinary lenses, including an aesthetic one, or at least, a museology lens. The next section on comparative analysis extends this interdisciplinary approach, but looks at an issue, idea, or process across cultures and/or over time.

Comparative Analysis

We were talking about Oceania and headhunting rituals and the cannibalism of eating the body and drinking the blood and the students were saying, “Oh, this sounds very strange,” and I didn’t say anything because I knew what was coming. We went down to the paintings of the Eucharist. I said, “I’m a Catholic and we talk about transubstantiation and it literally changes to the body and blood of Christ”... Another favorite tour is Food for Thought.... Students got very interested in this idea of ingesting food and changing consciousness because that came up whether it was hallucinogens in ancient America or Kava in Oceania or whether it was the Eucharist.... That kept coming up as a sub-theme and the instructor said, “Can we just make a tour on this?” And I said, “We can do anything.” I love a challenge. We did a tour on bovines, looking at bovines in the collection because they were reading about bovines in anthropology. We looked at images of bovines throughout civilizations and throughout history. We looked at them as beasts of burden, or sacrificial animals and we got into some really interesting conversations. (curator of education)

The art museum lends itself well to comparing concepts over time and/or across cultures. A professor and curator/educator generally work together to create the class or classes. As a result of discussions with museum staff, a biology professor now takes his students to the museum to comparatively analyze expressions of love across cultures:

It’s evolved over the years, but the basic focus one could say would be looking at the representation of love in artwork. It arose from our studies in biology class in which we see the manifestation of depressive illness varies particularly from East and West because of the mind/body split in the West and its supposed absence from the East. So that in the West a person feeling depressed might speak of feeling blue, feeling isolated—it’s very feelings, whereas in the East no regard to feeling, but it would be upset stomach, belching, diarrhea. It’s a very visceral manifestation.... It gets attributed to the mind/body split. So we asked in class if such a dichotomy can be seen within depressive illness, can it
be seen within other, for lack of a better word, emotions? And love is something that would engage most college students and our laboratory is, in essence, the artwork. And so one question is whether there is a difference between Eastern and Western portrayals of love. But we also ask whether the portrayals of love in art are true to what scientists would say should be happening in the bodies.

For another example of comparative analysis, a professor of fashion design and clothing construction takes her students to the campus art museum to look at how styles change over time and to link changes in clothing and fabrics to the larger socio-political context:

For the fashion student, [the art museum has] been so extremely valuable to understand clothing better, to understand even what nudity means. Is nudity glamour or is it what is done to the imprisoned? ...I bring all the textile students here [to the campus art museum] because they need to see what fabric has meant over time.

These cases from anthropology, biology, and fashion design represent several of the disciplines where professors have learned how art can engage students in comparative analysis of a concept, behavior, or materiality across cultures and over time. Another way that professors and curators/educators use art is to critique societal issues as touched upon next.

Critiquing Social Issues

Perhaps because the art museums in this study are on college and university campuses, curators are not hesitant to address hot issues or engage in social critique through special exhibitions. These are sometimes done in conjunction with specific courses or become drawing cards for classes examining similar issues. For example, campus art museums in this study have had exhibitions on censorship, the “sex of art,” nudity and nakedness, anorexia, the politics of photography, etc. Such exhibitions attract classes in gender studies, sociology, journalism, and literature, in particular. Exhibitions that explore societal issues tend to generate great interest on campus because they connect to students’ personal lives and their questioning of societal values. They also allow the curator to “rediscover parts of the collection that haven’t been used for years.” Of course, exhibitions that employ social critique or that are edgy sometimes become the object of critique themselves as a curator of education described: “We still sometimes get in trouble with students or their families. They’ll say, ’How dreadful for [the university] to spend money on something like that.’”

Museum staff talk also about using artwork as a means to engage students in conversations about social issues such as racism, sexism, prejudice, and stereotyping. An academic curator refers to this as “difficult dialogue” talk—a discussion that is “object-centered, but used to talk about difficult ethical situations, such as abortion or racial inequities.” The paintings or museum objects help to provide a “safe space” for the conversations, and in the process, according to the curator, “the object becomes a participant in the dialogue.” An art historian
reflected on the role of artists as activists and how that gets students to think about social critique and activism in a larger framework:

*Artists have always been activists. They’ve been shapers. They teach you how to look at the world through other eyes and bring up issues. That changes so much through time. How did an artist do that in the 14th century and how does an artist do that in the 21st century? Students love that. We’ve always wanted to take the challenging side of art, and so there’s always a social and political underpinning to all of this.*

**Research**

As well as being important for difficult dialogues, the art object is often a subject of inquiry, particularly by faculty in art history and museum studies. It is not surprising, then, that assignments in their classes ask students to select an object from the campus museum, research it, and present to the class. Sometimes such assignments are paired with college-wide emphases on developing undergraduate research skills. A professor who teaches a course for first-year students on “Native Americans in Fact and Fiction,” cross-listed in Popular Culture, Anthropology, and Museum Studies, takes her students into the museum’s storage to look at Native American art objects. Each student chooses an item to research, resulting in a presentation at the university-wide poster sessions held each year to highlight undergraduate research. At another institution, all graduate students in art history take an “Introduction to Graduate Studies” course in which they too choose an object in the museum, go through museum files on it, learn about its provenance, and deliver a twenty-minute polished presentation at sessions open to the public.

Museum objects are not the only foci of investigations. Sometimes the museum observer becomes the subject. While elementary students learned about art through visits to the academic museum, a doctoral student in art education studied their art vocabulary development. Another doctoral student was surprised by how many objects from her country (in Asia) were displayed in the campus art museum and shaped a research project to study how international visitors to the campus museum responded to and talked about the art. As a result of students’ interest in art and pharmacology generated through class visits to the campus museum, a pharmacology professor researched her own practice of using the museum in her courses, created a conference session, and was working on a publication about teaching pharmacology through art.

Similarly to studio faculty who make impromptu class visits to the museum so students can observe how artists paint eyes or hair, other faculty take classes to the museum to examine a concept, or to do spontaneous research, described here by an art history professor:

*Last year I was teaching a graduate seminar on Roman Masculinity. In the middle of the semester, a colleague of mine came and gave a lecture…. It was a lecture on Roman portraits and how Roman portraits, in a sense, come to life. He has this whole idea about how asymmetries are built into the portraits*
and as you move, at a certain point, everything lines up and the portrait kind of snaps to life.... And [we went to the museum] and tested it. We took all the portraits... and we just tested it.... It was testing a hypothesis and it was just interesting and we deviated from the class for a day.

As creative as many of these modes of using art and the campus art museum in classes are, art is also used to foster creativity as discussed in the final part of this section.

Creative Inspiration

This semester I have a class called advanced electro-acoustic music which is a project-based class for our majors. They spend the first half of the semester working on pieces that are based on the idea of storms. We spent the first three classes looking at different versions of storms. We listened to storm pieces [during] the first class. The second class, we looked at some dance work, and we looked at the third act of King Lear. So, we looked at the Tempest, literature, theater and dance. Then the third class we came here [to the museum’s print study room] where the [curators] had pulled fifteen pieces that had very different but very interesting ties to this notion of storms.... So having these three different kinds of classes at the beginning of the semester has basically been a launch pad for everybody in the class because they were all able to find their particular starting point for the piece. And so some people are now making compositions on something specific that they saw here in this room. (music professor)

Whether visual, musical, or verbal, professors use the art museum to inspire in their students creative acts and new art. A creative writing teacher may take students to the museum, ask them to find a piece that speaks to them in some way, and to then respond with a poem or a short story. Several of the museums hold annual essay contests where awards are given to students from any discipline for creative writing about an object in the museum. Theater and dance classes use the museum to inspire gesture and forms of movement. Professors in arts and humanities are not the only ones to use the museum to promote creative acts. An academic curator talked about a physics professor: “He wants his students to, in any creative way, communicate some issues in astronomy.” To assist with this, the museum is pulling works of art for the class that could provide students with ideas on ways to “convey or communicate messages through visual means.” Meanwhile, another campus art museum hopes to involve journalism students in creating some museum iPhone apps, yet a different form of creativity.
Collaborations Among Museum Staff and Faculty

As noted in previous sections, curators and other museum staff work closely with faculty and students on academic issues. They are both proactive, in suggesting to faculty ways in which the museum’s art could augment courses, and also responsive to professors’ requests for sessions in the museum, print study room, or the classroom. This section more explicitly delineates ways in which museum personnel and faculty are collaborating. It focuses first on co-teaching and then on programmatic collaborations.

A professor and a curator may co-teach a class session or they may team-teach a whole course. In short-term co-teaching, the professor generally brings a class to the museum or print study room for a collaborative session with a curator/educator and museum objects. For large lecture classes, the curator may be invited to the regular classroom to give a lecture, accompanied with slides from the collection. In long-term co-teaching, one or more faculty and museum personnel work together to prepare and teach a course. For example, a curator of European art co-taught a course with a professor interested in French history and WWII.

Collaborations also result from academic partnerships between the campus art museum and other institutional units. Some collaborations are limited in time and scope; others are formal, long-term partnerships. Campus art museums commonly partner with poetry and photography centers, art education, and departments in the arts for the development of a particular program or event. One such collaboration, which expanded in unplanned ways, began when the curator of education at the Snite, with an art history graduate student, wrote the text for a catalogue on an exhibit of Piranesi prints. She then teamed up with an Italian language professor who had her students translate the catalogue into Italian. The students who translated the text gave tours of the exhibition in Italian for other Italian classes. Students of architecture came into the museum and drew from the Piranesi works. Then the Director of the Institute of Languages and Cultures collaborated with the museum to create a web site on the exhibition. A student working on this project was getting his MA in Italian studies, and sought out more Piranesi prints than were in the show. The web site included drawings of the prints by the architecture students, as well as photos of places depicted in the prints taken by architecture students in a program in Rome, along with the students’ comments about taking the photo and being in Rome. This “happening” began with the co-creation of a catalogue by a language class and the museum, but expanded to classes and activities in other disciplines and to students’ research and experiences.

In another collaborative effort at the University of Kansas (KU), education, the library, athletics, and the campus art museum come together to help new athletes develop composition and speech skills while being introduced to resources at the art museum and library. Referred to as the “Summer Bridge Program,” incoming student athletes are brought to campus early to learn about the university’s resources and to begin developing college skills. Staff from the various units work together to create learning communities and then involve the students.
in different settings. A learning services coordinator described the way in which they use the museum:

We came in on a Monday – the museum is closed on Monday. The students, the vast majority, anyway, have never been in an art museum. We... talked about how to act in the space, how to use the space, and the value of the space and the collections within the space... On Tuesday, we came in and we had a facilitated tour... and we then broke up into small groups.... The small group then would sit in front of a piece and look at it and talk about it as a small group, and then we came back together as a large group and each small group would present their particular piece to the rest of the class.... On Wednesday, we turned students loose in the museum on their own with one directive, which was to go look around, find something you connect with, and think about why that piece resonates with you and jot down some notes about it. The museum staff was incredible on that day. I don't know how many people turned out, ten, twelve museum staffers and they just wandered around and talked to the students and engaged them and maybe tried to ask good questions or spark conversation that could help generate new ideas. That night, we asked the students to go home and write 150 words about the chosen piece, that was based on... the “art minute” that KPR and NPR do.... They came back the following day on Thursday and we now had the class, museum staff, I had invited a few coaches... and even people who were just in the museum.... I would say we had maybe thirty to forty people as a crowd and each student stood in front of the piece that they had chosen and read their art minute.... We had asked the students to use the library databases, the [campus art museum] website, and the art and architecture library to not do a tremendous amount of research... but to maybe find out an interesting fact or idea that they wouldn't have known just by looking at the piece. For this class, you are always trying to get the students, who are essentially pre-freshmen, to get ready for classes that they'll take in that first year. Communications Studies 130 is an important class on this campus where you get up and make speeches in front of class, so here was practice in standing up which is also something that athletes have to do a lot – to be comfortable in front of a camera or in front of a crowd and be able to be articulate. So we did that. We got them in a space that most had never been in before and not only specifically the [campus art museum] but an art museum period. The demographic of my group is important in that it is predominantly African American, so in terms of diversity for the art museum, I think that's important... And it was collaboration amongst three entities that you don't really see together all that often, the art museum, the athletic department, and the library.

This collaboration's success resulted in expansions of the program. Instructors made a video of the presentations to help other students get comfortable with and to make use of the museum. Collaborators presented on the Art Minute assignment at KU’s annual Teaching Summit sponsored by the Center for Teaching Excellence. The library colleagues then wrote detailed instructions for the
assignment and promoted it in a campus-wide course for first-year students⁹. Over ten sections used the assignment the same semester it was promoted.

An example of a formal partnership is The Commons, an interdisciplinary center at the University of Kansas that connects the Hall Center for the Humanities, the Biodiversity Institute, and the Spencer Museum of Art. It creates public events, exhibitions, and provides seed funding for research projects that are interdisciplinary and collaborative and for art projects that integrate the arts, sciences, and humanities. The center receives some funding from the provost’s office, but as one of the Commons directors said, “it’s totally bottom up and not top down.” Another partnership is the University of Missouri (MU) Museum of Art and Archaeology collaboration with the autism center, special education department, and the companion animals program in animal sciences. People from each of these programs, including the museum, are interested in meeting needs of those easily overloaded by stimuli and are creating research projects together.

**Museum Exhibitions and their Integration into Classes and Research**

As part of the effort to extend the reach of the museum into university/college teaching and research, museum curators often develop exhibitions that respond to campus-wide academic themes and sometimes to the research and interests of faculty and students, increasingly in collaboration with them. The following section addresses the ways in which exhibitions intersect with the academic work of institutions by discussing exhibitions of faculty and students’ art, exhibitions that complement college or university semester themes and courses, and exhibitions curated by or with faculty and students.

**Art Made by Faculty and Students**

The work of one or more professors who are also artists is sometimes the focus of an exhibition that, as a professor in the arts stated, provides the “chance that students would see them out of context, and go, ‘Oh, my gosh, this is an art historian who is also a maker’.” Institutions that grant BFAs and MFAs show students’ work, but not always in the campus museum. Exhibiting in the museum makes a difference, as a professor in the arts described:

> Our MFA/BFA exhibit is in the museum, it’s hosted by the museum and shown here in the museum. Most schools... tend to have their BFA and MFA shows in student-run galleries. We use the fact that those that are graduating show their work in a professionally curated museum as a selling point for our program.... You have to turn it in to the curators here and I think there’s a pressure on students, a good pressure, that raises the level of our MFA and BFA programs.... It exerts an unspoken pressure to get their technical and conceptual level up because they know what it is going to be seen with. That event is a big deal, I

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⁹. For the library guide to the Art Minute assignment, see: [http://guides.lib.ku.edu/artminute](http://guides.lib.ku.edu/artminute).
think it’s the biggest single day every year. I think the [campus art museum] has about eight hundred visitors on that day in late March or early April. In fact, because that’s such an important event on campus, the Design Program at [institution] has built an alumni design conference and we host it that same weekend because we are bringing alums back who graduated ten years ago and they want to see the exhibits…. Parents, grandparents, all the friends of students attend. I know for a fact that some international students have had parents who will come for that weekend and not for graduation. If there is a choice, they come for the BFA show…. It’s amazing.

Other campus art museums that hold MFA or BFA shows reported that they, too, generate many visits from students and families.

Exhibitions Created to Complement a Theme or Course

As discussed previously, many colleges and universities have a semester-long or annual thematic program that becomes a forum for interdisciplinary thinking as well as a way to give students (usually first-year) a common experience. Exemplary campus art museums perceive this as an opportunity for curriculum engagement, create an exhibition around the theme, and encourage faculty to bring students to the museum. According to an academic curator:

[The institution] has a unique program called the themester. Every fall there is a themed semester. This year’s was sustainability and next year’s is going to be war and peace. The way a themester works is to encourage professors to invent new classes or to cross-list existing classes that pertain to the theme…. There are definitely over one hundred courses cross-listed from many, many different fields.... We made use of that themester idea and designed a gallery session around the themester. So for sustainability, we used all three floors of the collection and looked for works of art that fell into the theme. We found works of art made of recycled materials as well as sustainable materials and we also found works of art that dealt with events in history that were important milestones for our current unsustainable practices.... And then we had a third category of art that were sacred works of art that were believed, in their cultural context, to literally have the power to improve human relationships with nature.... We trained all of our docents in how to give this tour, but then we did something else that was neat,... we worked with the honors college and trained student docents on the content of our sustainability tour. I had reached out to every faculty member who was teaching a class that was cross-listed for the sustainability themester and so we ended up with many sustainability classes visiting and the sustainability tour being given by students from the honors college.

Some exhibitions are created in conjunction with specific courses. For example, an exhibition Astronomy and Art was developed at one museum for an introduction to astronomy course. At another museum, astronomy classes made use of an exhibition called As Above, So Below. It bridged the esoteric and the scientific,
focusing on people who have followed the stars and the ways in which events on earth have corresponded with the stars.

Exhibitions Curated or Assisted by Faculty and/or Students

Faculty from various disciplines are sometimes called upon to provide advice and assistance in specific exhibitions. For example, one campus art museum worked with several professors in optics to incorporate an optic lens demonstration into an exhibition showing how, as museum staff described, the "old masters used lenses as a device to help visualize." Museum staff also seek out partners to develop special exhibitions. For instance, the Snite collaborated with the Latin Studies program to create an exhibition on migration that "brought in classes and even people from Chicago." The University of Arizona Museum of Art (UAMA) provides an inspiring example of working with students in a non-art discipline to develop and curate a show. This exhibition, called *The Aesthetic Code: Unraveling the Secrets of Art*, drew on skills and knowledge from both mathematics and art, as described by the curator:

> I wanted to do an exhibition on math and art…. I thought it would be really interesting and we could talk about the golden ratio and fractals and all this stuff that honestly I didn't personally understand when I first started… I called up the person who is in charge of the listserv in the math department and I said... “Put in there that I'm looking for math students who are interested in art to come and mathematically analyze works in our collection so we can see what we've got.” And so I got these three students…. We were definitely the blind leading the blind at first. We didn't know what we would find and …after a while we sort of trained our own eyes and got really good at seeing them right away, which pieces would have relationships that we could utilize and talk about. It evolved because we started with the hardest parts, we started with golden ratio and color and optics and fractals. We started at the high level and one day I had this epiphany because I was having trouble pulling it all together, “oh, we have to start with line”…. So that was really fun and they really enjoyed it.

The exhibit explored mathematic and design principles that artists have used over the centuries. Combing through the works from the museum's collection, the three students and the curator chose art appropriate for demonstrating line to tessellations. The text accompanying each work of art was written in a way to explain the concepts to someone not necessarily familiar with either art or math. As a result of the exhibition, with assistance of the curator of education, 130 teachers in a local school district program learned how to use the exhibition concepts and catalogue as a tool for teaching science and math (UAMA Annual Report 2011, 4). A mathematics professor commented on the value of the project for university classes as well:

> What [the curator] did worked so well and she could do the same with engineering, with biology…. I've told all my students to come to the exhibit. I
would encourage professors to initiate projects like this outside their disciplines for their students. In the task of getting involved in the arts, they had to use the truths and teachings from the sciences.

Some of the museums, the Smart in particular, are working to make faculty research and interests a major factor in their special exhibitions. They make an effort to include faculty from across the curriculum and to get them involved in all aspects of creating an exhibition from planning through execution of a show, as described by museum personnel:

The first motivation was simply not to wince when a faculty member would say, “Oh, if only I had known you were doing that exhibition, I would have taught my related course, but I didn't know,” so we wanted to get past that. But we wanted to do something more profound than that. We wanted to be sure that a faculty member wasn't just teaching the related course, but that our exhibition got the benefit of their related knowledge in the field and that we would talk to them early enough, not just that they could plan to teach their course or maybe that, if we were really lucky, that they would teach a new course or alter their course in a way that made a better partner for the exhibition, but that the exhibition itself would be shaped by what they had to bring to the table.... The model is in place that we can really draw upon the curriculum and the curriculum and the exhibition are growing organically together in a way that was not true in the past.

The special exhibition when I visited the Smart demonstrated the crucial involvement of faculty and, as one respondent stated, “reflects the intellectual dynamics at the University.” The idea for the exhibition grew out of the dissertation research of a faculty member who had done her work on Buddhist caves in China, and had been discussed before the current director of the museum arrived. As he states,

We started talking about the ways in which we could benefit by other elements of the university. How could we really make use of the university besides focusing on the research of one individual? This idea of placing the sculpture, these fragments, in a context was pretty attractive.... We had all this footage that had been taken not by some professional travelogue maker, but... by the technical guy who had been working on scanning... and then we got... a documentary film maker who works on the faculty of the Department of Visual Arts to select and stitch it together and that's where the so-called pilgrimage video came from that is in the show. And then of course, the grandest element of all was the digital cave and that is the work of... another faculty member in the Department of Visual Arts and he uses digital media, that is his art form.... We also talked to our colleagues at the Oriental Institute.... about dispersed archaeological monuments and what to do about them, about the legitimacy of presenting work that was looted.... and we wanted to get those perspectives from the university early enough that the project's shape could reflect their participation.... We were showcasing the relationship of the museum’s work and research done at the university. We were calling upon the talents of an array of people at the university, but trying to do a project that was not simply aimed
at a narrow slice of researchers in Chinese art.... We wanted people to think about the processes of research, the kinds of research that can be done, about the array of talent that exists at the university.... It was pretty exhausting, but it was an excellent project for us to work on and it has done exactly what we hoped. This show is going on to Dallas and San Diego.

The next big project for the Smart is called *The Tragic Muse*. Eight faculty have taken part in a year-long series of planning workshops.

The process of collaborating with faculty and students in the creation of exhibitions is affecting the scheduling of exhibitions and aligning them more closely to academic semesters. As a museum director stated, “We try to not schedule exhibitions too far out so we can better involve students and faculty.” An academic curator at another museum described how they are approaching scheduling as an important part of integrating the museum into campus academics:

*The benefit of collaborating with faculty has extended into everything we do. So now we no longer think about doing an exhibition at the [campus art museum] unless we can really understand how and why it is here at [institution]. We’ve changed the way we think about our exhibition schedule. So we now have two longer shows during the academic year and we have a set of qualities that we want those shows to embody in terms of presenting original research and new ways of thinking about whatever topic they are addressing, deep opportunities for collaboration with students and faculty, the potential to transform the way that the area is perceived by our audiences here at the university and potentially around the world... wanting this to be big, ambitious meaty projects that are in and of the [institution] spirit and its resources. During the summer we are focusing on a shorter collection show that gives us an opportunity to often work with students to do research on those in advance, to help us think about opportunities to build gifts around these key areas of the collection, opportunities to research those areas of the collection. And then as we move into having this new, robust online database, getting that research out to the world and out to our colleagues here at the university also. It is shifting our ways of thinking about how we structure our projects.*

According to several museum respondents, faculty often “are too busy and worried about publications and getting tenure” to get involved in museum exhibitions. This, obviously, is not always the case. As campus art museums become more integrated into the academic life of an institution, with exhibitions reflecting the research and knowledge of campus faculty, it may become more common for faculty to participate in museum exhibitions. As a result, promotion and tenure review committees are likely to eventually look at their standards and include planning, researching, and curating exhibitions and writing for museum publications as evidence of research and scholarship.
When I asked a museum director about the impact of the grant from the Mellon Foundation, she responded that “this model of education will be a model down the line for all museums, not just academic museums.” In the 1990s, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation initiated the College and University Art Museum Program to encourage museums and academic departments to collaborate and strengthen the educational role of museum collections in university/college students’ learning (Goethals and Fabing 2007). By the conclusion of the program in 2005, eighteen academic museums had received initial three-year grants; fourteen continued with a second three-year grant; and thirteen of these matched a challenge from the Foundation to establish a permanent endowment. The Foundation awarded more than thirteen million dollars over this period.

Four of the seven museums in this Kress Foundation Campus Art Museum Study are recipients of these Mellon grants. Without doubt, the grants allow museums to do things that they could not do otherwise. They use Mellon funds to, as an academic curator noted, “be more aggressive in seeking out and creating relationships with faculty.” They use Mellon funds to support interns and assistant curators who work with academic curators and obtain valuable experience working with faculty and students in return. They use Mellon funds to create course development grants that encourage faculty to become better acquainted with the collection and to incorporate art into their classes and research. They use Mellon funds for the development of courses in which museum curators and faculty collaborate.

The most important aspect of the Mellon funding, however, the aspect that is likely to become the “model” for other museums, is the creation of an academic curator position. Prior to the Mellon grant, these museums and others tended to have a museum education position in which a person (sometimes several) was expected to reach out to local schools, the community, and possibly the campus. As recipients of the Mellon grants worked to figure out how to better involve the museum and its collections in the education of college and university students, the academic curator position evolved. The academic curator might work on a variety of museum projects, but always with the eye towards involving students and faculty. As a journalism professor put it, the academic curator’s role was to “build bridges” between the museum and campus teaching and scholarship. The education curator could then focus on museum outreach to the public schools and community. Lines are never as clear-cut as this sounds, but it has made a tremendous difference to the institutions that are recipients of the grant. As a respondent stated, “There was really a lot of tension before we got these two positions together and really articulated [the education curator’s] role for K-12 and the public and [the academic curator’s] role for the academic side of things because the person was just stretched

10. At the various institutions that have used Mellon grants to fund positions that link the museum and campus faculty and students, the titles for the position tend to acknowledge the Mellon support. For examples, The Andrew W. Mellon Director of Academic Programs at the Spencer and Curator and Mellon Program Coordinator at the Smart.
too thin. Nobody could do that position well.” A curator at another recipient museum was referring to connecting the museum with the academic curriculum when he stated,

*It's something we have been attuned to... and we all did as much as we could, but it wasn't our main job. And now to have someone who is dedicated to doing that full-time—not only is dedicated to it, but is really good at it—it's really taken off. So we didn't start from zero... but it's just going like crazy now and that's just after a year.*

A literature professor at one of the Mellon grant recipient institutions talked about his appreciation and fears regarding the academic curator position:

*That position is vital to what so many of us do now and it's been on temporary funding for years. My biggest fear is that [the academic curator's] funding is going to disappear and that she or her successor is just going to be far away. All these great things have happened in my class because [of the academic curator].*

Making the logic and benefit of this position compelling throughout the parent organization is key, and that seems to be happening at the institutions that received Mellon support.

Not all institutions will receive such generous external funding. When asked about this, a director who had put much effort into obtaining the grant replied that the success of the Mellon programs has “paved the way for arguments we all need to make to our donors.” She continued that it was “a perfect opportunity for an academic museum who can’t get a Mellon grant to get a donor and say, ‘Look this is what they are doing there and this is the success rate. This is something we can do and even if you are not about the museum, you’re supporting the rest of the campus.’” As the director acknowledged, this process takes time. At institutions that are not recipients of Mellon grants, the education curators are busy working with faculty, students, docents, K-12 students, and the community. One focuses her outreach at the university on foreign language professors and works with students to provide language tours for interested classes. An educator at another institution described her job as working “with all ages, from preschoolers to Alzheimers,” referring not only to a span of ages, but also a range of needs.

Nonetheless, recipients of the grants are creating prototypes for other museums to explore. The Mellon Foundation has played an important role in shifting the attention of campus art museums to a mostly overlooked audience—university/college students and faculty. The word is spreading. Although only three of the museums in this study had not received Mellon grants, my sense is that many museums without such grants are currently figuring out ways to better involve the campus art museum in the academic life of the campus. For example, the MU Museum of Art and Archaeology, one of the museums without the benefits of the Mellon grants, has created a half-time academic coordinator position because the logic of the position was compelling, even in the absence of an outside mandate and outside funding.
A Town/Gown Divide?

As the reach of the campus art museum expands, one might expect some tension between serving the community and serving the campus, yet none of the museum directors in the study perceive this as a problem. Academic museums generally need both community and institutional support. Not only do they receive some economic support from the community in the form of donations, grants, service fees, space rental fees, and sometimes admission fees and sales at gift stores; the museums also often recruit docents, volunteers, security staff, and members of museum boards or associations from the community. In return, the academic art museums provide school-age students with access to art in an era when budget cuts frequently remove art classes from public schools. One museum director stated,

*I feel no tension at all [between serving the community and the university]. Occasionally when we do our strategic planning and everybody said, “Who’s our primary audience?” and there were all these debates... I basically said, “Guys, let’s be realistic.... We’ve already said that the university is our prime audience, and... we are already proportionately doing more for that primary audience, but we are never going to cut out our K-12 programs. That is essential to build new audiences, to engage youngsters in the world of art.... It’s important, it’s really important, especially with no art in the schools.”*

That "town and gown" is not as dualistic as first appears became increasingly evident through visits to the museums. The participation of college or university students and faculty is often vital to community events and the participation of the community is sometimes of primary interest for faculty and students. A museum director noted:

*An odd twist to all this is that even though I came here with the focus on the academic mission and we’ve done that, what’s developed is that the old antagonism between being a public museum and being a university museum has sort of dissolved... a lot of the departments out there who use us actively as part of their curriculum, depend upon us because we are a public museum. Art educators, for example, aren’t just interested in coming here to see art, they want kids in here that they can study to see what pedagogy works. The same thing with the journalism folks. They love working us but they love working with us because we are a laboratory they can use.*

The Journalism School at this institution, in fact, created a formal arts reporting track. In addition, the museum and the Department of Art History and Archaeology were re-launching a museum studies track to make use of the campus museum as a living laboratory, involving the university and the community. Students at the various museums agree that the campus museum should not be for them alone, but rather open to everyone:
The museum is necessary for the whole community, not only for the campus and for the Tucson area and Arizona, but we have people from out of state. They come particularly to look at our Retablo. We have people from actually out of the country who come here. And to see that we have these amazing European pieces of artwork or a pretty good collection of contemporary art, it just benefits everybody because we can be here and be known as a place that's not particularly just for the students, where people come in to appreciate the art and not just write homework assignments.

11. The Retablo of the Cathedral of Ciudad Rodrigo consists of twenty-six panels by Fifteenth Century Spanish painters Fernando Gallego and Maestro Bartolomé. Donated by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, the Retablo is one of the most important altarpieces produced by Spanish masters.
Incorporating the campus art museum into university and college teaching and research is not without challenges. Meeting with faculty to create individualized course use of the museum takes time for museum personnel, particularly if the staff person is also responsible for public school and community education programs. Co-teaching museum sessions with faculty also takes time for planning and preparation. A museum director commented on some of the challenges of working with faculty:

There’s a constant change of faculty and it’s not like you reach out to a discipline, you reach out to those faculty members. Each one of them uses you in different ways…. The good news is that the turnover becomes an opportunity to reach out to new faculty members before they have already established all the patterns of how they are going to teach something…. For older faculty, it’s harder… they’ve got their teaching schedule, they’ve got their classes, they’ve worked out how to do it and it’s a pain for them to try to change. With new faculty it’s easier, but that means there’s never an end to that effort.

Academic curators mention how “one-offs can become a burnout,” that is, working with faculty to use the museum in their courses and finding that they do so only once. Some academic curators see that as a challenge to figure out ways in which they can be more proactive:

We try to make it so you can’t just drop your students off and leave…. If professors are teaching the classes, they are more invested and they will do a better job. I want them to feel that they can teach and bring in their perspectives. They don’t have to be made art historians to teach in the museum…. There are various degrees of handholding. And the idea is that maybe you start off with a bit more handholding and eventually let go and hopefully you don’t lose them.

Indeed, habitual museum-users often stated that they first collaborated with museum staff in using the collection in a class and then, as they grew in confidence, they continued to use the museum on their own.

An increase in the number of faculty wanting to make use of the museum’s resources in storage is a further demand on museum staff. Time and care are involved in locating and moving art that can be heavy and fragile, and then the museum must have a safe place for its use. This is not always the case. As one registrar noted, they have tried to accommodate classes, but space is a problem:

We sometimes will take objects into the seminar room upstairs… but we can’t really do that with paintings. Prints are a different thing. We have set a table up in the gallery and brought a bunch of stuff out…. We don’t have a room to set things up and leave it for a couple weeks or anything like that. Some museums do have that but we don’t have any space for that. So it’s a problem
The Power of the Original

when they say, “I want to show all this pre-Columbian stuff to my class.” It’s like, how would that work? We don’t have anywhere to put it.

A museum director noted that perhaps one of the smartest things he’s done is to close the museum shop and turn it into a works-on-paper gallery so that classes could have greater access to the museum’s resources.

Other challenges to academic use of the museums include evening classes and courses with a large number of students. In general, campus art museums are not open in the evenings, although some stay open one or two evenings a week. Alternative arrangements are sometimes made by the museum for evening classes, but at the added expense of hiring security personnel. Professors with large classes tend to not take their students to the museum as part of class, but instead might make assignments that require students to go on their own. Exceptions exist. An art history professor divides her course into smaller sections and takes each group to the museum for the students’ final presentations in front of works of art researched for the course. A Classics professor takes all 200 students in his course to the museum. He splits them into different groups and gives them “a kind of scavenger hunt” of things to find related to the course.

Despite the challenges, all of the museums in the study are working with faculty, students, and departments across the curriculum. Professors at several places noted an increase in the number of faculty using the museum. A political scientist, himself an avid convert to museum use, said, “Once you are more awake to the ways you can use the museum, then it becomes more easy to do so.” To some extent, faculty themselves are the best ambassadors. For example, Pima College faculty make good use of the UAMA in their courses. According to museum personnel, “We’ve had a couple of professors who have been real friends to us and have told some of these other folks, ‘Hey, take your kids over to the art museum.’ And they have picked up on that more and more.”

Extending the reach of the art museum into courses across disciplines appears to be worth the effort. Experiencing a live dance performance or a concert is different from viewing it on a screen and interacting with the original object is also a unique experience. An arts professor referred to this as the “power of the original” in a digital age. He continued:

To be in an environment with a work of art such as the Retablo... when that phenomenological experience happens, they relate more directly to it. They see exactly the stylistic developments, they see the surface of the paint, the brush stroke or notation by the artist. That’s crucial... You need the phenomenological experience to understand the creative process, so that insights into that work of art become more unique, more original for the students... It is not just a concept, not just an idea, not just a projection on the wall or a photograph. It is an experience.

Another professor of the arts talked about how the experience of art can lead to wonder:
It is important to ask “What do you see?”... and then, they start asking questions.... It gives them the chance to wonder. Right now students are so fastened down, and it is so important for them to wonder about things and to have questions.

James Cuno (2004, 21), President and CEO of the J. Paul Getty Trust and, until recently, President and Director of the Art Institute of Chicago, also discusses the importance of wonder, stating that he wants to “recover this sense of wonder as part of the museum’s purpose and as integral to its contract with the public.” Wonder is accompanied by a range of emotions that engage the beholder. An art history graduate student, now specializing in the Renaissance, described the awe she felt before the work of Botticelli before she knew who Botticelli was:

I remember walking around Florence and seeing these images of Botticelli’s Birth of Venus everywhere and I had no idea what is was and I just thought, why is this image everywhere? I remember walking into the Uffizi. We were on a kind of whirlwind tour and I remember walking into that room and shivers ran down my spine. There was this physical reaction.... This has happened to me a couple times but that was one of the first. I was absolutely shocked by the beauty of the thing, this other-worldly beauty.

A business professor involves her accounting students in the campus art museum. When asked about their reactions to the museum, she received responses such as, “Wow, I didn’t know that was here. I’m going to come back again.” She also “got a couple of really strong responses” to an exhibition by a Romanian resident artist who used black markers to draw on the wall:

He did some drawings and one of them was a picture of a vampire and underneath it said banker.... Some students were really offended by that. It was a really strong reaction. The comments I got in the write-up were “Who does he think is going to buy art? Who does he think supports the arts? Banks buy art”.... I think the thought that [the artist] would have been very happy with their response was lost on them. He really got them to engage and think hard about the relationship between business and art.

Whether shocked by beauty or personally offended, it is the power of the object to engage, that process of experiencing, that begets the curiosity and excitement to know more or to more deeply examine personal values.

Faculty and curators also mention how, invariably, some students excel in the museum environment in ways they do not in the regular classroom because art taps into personal interests, knowledge bases, and creativity. For example, a German professor who took her students to the museum told about a student “whose German wasn’t very good, so class time wasn’t easy for him, not a very dedicated student perhaps but he connected with the posters.... He gave a wonderful presentation and I hadn’t anticipated that, but was thrilled that he found something in this class to connect with.” Incorporating the museum and
its collections into courses tends to take both professors and their students to unplanned and unexplored places, resulting in a kind of excitement that is palpable.

A Classics professor has used the campus art museum in his courses since he arrived at the university. He was taken to the museum when he interviewed for the job, and he now takes new candidates there when they interview. He stated, "Here we are out in the middle of the country and we get these candidates who have lived nowhere but the coasts and they think this is a great cultural wasteland, [until] we bring them into the museum and they say, 'Wow, you guys really have something going on here.'" Faculty and students across the country are discovering the same thing. Encouraged by museum staff who have made academic involvement part of their mission, faculty and students across the disciplines are learning how the academic art museum can expand horizons, opening up a breadth of ideas, creativity, and possibilities.
Sources


