INTRODUCTION

This study focused on how academic libraries support studio practice programs, specifically visual arts. Students in a studio-based program like visual arts do relatively idiosyncratic research as they experiment with technique, content, and form. Pre-visualization and physical production are important parts of the studio practice program. By observing how information is used in the studio practice program, this study can find how a library effectively supports student education within these programs. Similarities and differences in how libraries handle the needs of visual arts students can be explored. By comparing this study with other studies from the visual arts community, this work can help libraries develop their own effective approaches.

A comprehensive literature review was conducted in order to gain a foundation on the subject. This research involved a range of aspects, such as the information behaviour of visual artists, institutional forces, and the role of the visual arts within society. The review is intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

Working definition

Visual art (this) term, shortened to “artist” when appropriate, encompasses all practicing creative artists who maintain some form of studio or lab practice. This term includes all creative artists, whether they work in art, design, or craft; all creative artists regardless of medium; all artists of all ages and levels of experience, including art students, art department faculty members, professional artists, and members of the public that create art while maintaining an alternative source of income. It should be noted that the term “visual artists” does not include art historians.

Exploring Canadian Academic Libraries

To examine how academic libraries meet the needs of visual arts students, a sample of institutions was selected. The comprehensive libraries with well-recognized visual arts programs, Concordia University and York University, and fine arts specific institutions, Emily Carr Institute of Art & Design (Emily Carr) and the Ontario College of Art & Design University (OCAD). Certain factors were isolated to determine how these libraries meet the needs of visual arts students.

LITERATURE REVIEW & THEMES IDENTIFIED

Visual artists engage with information in unique ways. The literature highlights themes and commonalities across cultures, such as an almost unanimous preference for browsing as a search strategy. A lack of conclusive research has been the most common finding. Knowledge information is not that traditionally associated with libraries and cannot be described as “linear,” instead looking at the subjective and diverse ways that artists use information. These forms of information seeking may be related to the value artists see in the process of discovery and unforeseen influences.

Meeting the needs of these users may be a challenge due to the idiosyncratic nature of the creative process that drives them. The information behaviour model provided by Cobbledick (1994) research of visual art students is some of the help that can help libraries isolating significant information needs and existing methods artists use. Libraries must teach out to areas, where they operate and libraries need to maintain an aesthetically pleasing collection, friendly atmosphere, easy to understand organization of materials.

Information Behaviour

The information model proposed by Cobbledick (1994) is constructed as a general framework to guide future research. It was later refined by Hemmig (2009) to four reasons that visual artists seek information: 1) inspiration, 2) specific visual elements, 3) knowledge of materials and techniques, and 4) marketing and commercial interest. There is arguably a fifth point—knowledge of current trends in the art world—that Hemmig found was not entirely distinct from the other elements.

Idiosyncratic, Individualized Information Needs

The information needs of visual artists vary, arising from personal, self-motivated incentives (Cobbledick, 1994; Hemmig, 2009). Cobbledick notes this diversity to the creative process and Hemmig found sources of inspiration ranged a great deal depending on various factors such as academic affiliation or community.

Browsing as the Preferred Search Strategy

Visual artists tend to prefer browsing as a searching strategy (Cobbledick, 1994; Frank, 1999; Hemmig, 2008, 2009; Ullrich, 2001). Browsing is guided by past experiences and encompasses a wide variety of resources such as: art encyclopedias, art history resources, technical art books, and periodicals. Artists prefer to browse, but rather reflect a desire to explore and discover previously unidentified resources of inspiration.

Exploring Canadian Academic Libraries

The factors identified to make the physical library environment more appealing to artists are: easy access to materials, wider aisles between stacks, user-friendly signage, and guiding areas for socialization (Cobbledick, 1994; Frank, 2008). The most common factors mentioned were: access to books, periodicals, audiovisual resources, art history resources, artist interviews, and technical manuals. Artists generally prefer using the public library due to easy access to accessible resources, diverse content that is easy to browse, and friendly environment.

Social Networking

Social networking is important for sharing this acquired information. Attending workshops or lectures and attending shows are important events to inform the artistic practice (Cobbledick, 1994; Frank, 1999). These are an important source of inspiration or new techniques, making them important connections. While socializing is a significant factor for artists, it should be noted that the creation of the artwork itself is often a solitary undertaking influenced by these social interactions.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY


COPYRIGHT AND LICENSING CONSIDERATIONS

Moving from physical resources to digital reproductions has highlighted copyright and licensing issues around image use for galleries, instruction, and art and academic libraries. Digital images come with their own work, and educators must be aware of that. Visual artists and students often make use of images, making educators, researchers, and faculty more aware of licensing, copyright law, and practical issues. Legal issues and strategies for libraries have been identified. It is shown that some students consider copyright issues a major concern that limits their research, while students and educators see copyright issues as a legal concern.

CONCLUSION

The discipline of performing arts includes users in music, theatre, stage, dance, and fine line. Considering the varying needs, it is interesting that “artist” can encompass all of these creative fields. Due to the larger theme of this study, these disciplines were examined in relation to academic libraries. While this research was not necessarily found to be transferable, visual arts could benefit from a similarly thorough body of literature. These studies focus on determining what resources users want, and as such how users can benefit from technology and electronic resources.

The purpose of this library support is to provide a solution to all of these challenges. It should be noted that the presence of a library resource can be a significant factor for artists, but rather reflect a desire to explore and discover previously unidentified sources of inspiration. Librarians and other support personnel can provide a valuable resource for artists. Artists browse to gather stimulus through diverse sources of information, but what do they browse for? Why do they browse? Their information needs are idiosyncratic. The design of the library must accommodate these needs, and provide a welcoming environment for artists to explore.

Library resources can be a significant factor for artists. It should be noted that the library is an important resource for artists, and the library can accommodate these needs. Librarians and other support personnel can provide a valuable resource for artists. Artists browse to gather stimulus through diverse sources of information, but what do they browse for? Why do they browse? Their information needs are idiosyncratic. The design of the library must accommodate these needs, and provide a welcoming environment for artists to explore.

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