The past decade has seen significant development within colleges and universities in establishing digital institutional repositories (IRs) for collecting, preserving, and providing long-term access to scholarly production and research assets. Although there has been a correspondingly large amount of research into the role and functioning of IRs broadly speaking, a focused investigation of contributions by Studio Art Departments to these new platforms for sharing research has not yet been conducted. This paper describes the results of an exploratory study which collected the dual perspectives of Art Department and IR administrators to gather information about collection practices for documentation of artworks created by students and faculty, Art Departments’ awareness of and engagement with IRs for depositing these collections, and how repositories support digital documentation of artwork in terms of specifications for file types, metadata creation procedures, and access conditions.

Headings:

Institutional repositories

Studio art – Documentation

Education – Studio art
COLLECTING AND DOCUMENTING FACULTY AND STUDENT ARTWORK IN INSTITUTIONAL REPOSITORIES IN U.S. COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

by
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A Master’s paper submitted to the faculty of the School of Information and Library Science of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Library Science.

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Approved by

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Introduction

This research grew out of an internship at my university’s institutional repository. In May of 2013, my university transitioned to born-digital submissions for MFA thesis projects, implementing web-based forms allowing students to upload their own files and metadata to be ingested into the repository. Prior to this, students submitted documentation of artworks in print, and the thesis collection included nearly forty years’ worth of MFA students’ projects from 1972-2011, residing in three-ring binders on two shelves behind the circulation desk at the Art Library.

Access to the binders was restricted to in-library use only, and the materials were not represented in the online library catalog. Patrons aware of and interested in these materials could view the table of contents within each binder listing the artists included, or could consult an index kept in a separate binder for all the MFA projects as a collection.

Each student’s thesis submission included a written component of 10-40 pages along with images documenting artworks which students selected to represent their development throughout the program as well as their culminating MFA thesis exhibition. Some students’ project binders also included images of other artists’ artworks which were relevant to their own working process, or were influential on the development of their ideas during their time in the Master’s program.
Forms of documentation evolved substantially over the forty-year period during which these projects were collected. Types of documentation appearing in the binders included color transparencies, photographic prints in color and black & white, images saved on CD-ROMS as JPEGs, and color and black & white photocopies of photographs. Because of the vulnerable nature of these media, much of this documentation was fragile and susceptible to degradation and information loss over time. This collection represents a rich resource, however, revealing a wide range of studio art practice at the university over the history of the Master of Fine Arts program. As a result, the collection was chosen for digitization at the Carolina Digital Library & Archives, and each page within the collected documents was scanned, providing high-resolution TIF files. PDFs were created from the scans, as digital surrogates representing the entirety of the materials in each student’s project.

When I began my internship at the Carolina Digital Repository in September of 2013, the purpose of my project was to create metadata for the MFA projects at the level of individual files, to process and prepare the project folders, and to ingest these files into the repository. Digitizing these documents and including the collection in the IR, in addition to the benefit of preserving this unique information, increased access to the students’ work and represented the Studio Art Department within the shared University research community. Witnessing this process confirmed the argument by Lynch of the value offered by the IR as a location for “a much broader spectrum of new scholarly communications,” which might reflect the diverse nature of teaching and learning materials in the university and allow access to an expanded range of authors,
materials, and collections (Lynch, 2003, p. 333). Curious about how art departments and IRs at other colleges and universities are working together to collect, document, and preserve Studio Art materials as part of building diverse collections of research products, I set out to investigate this topic.

**Research Questions**

Over the past decade, there has been significant development within colleges and universities in establishing digital institutional repositories (IRs) for collecting, preserving, and providing long-term access to the rich spectrum of scholarly production and research assets identified by Lynch (2003). Accompanying this growth in the number of repositories has been a correspondingly large amount of research into the overall role and functioning of IRs, as well as content analyses of IRs across disciplines. However, a focused investigation of contributions by Studio Art Departments to these new platforms for sharing research has not yet been conducted.

This research seeks to address this gap in knowledge by conducting an exploratory study into the current level of engagement between Studio Art Departments and their institutions’ digital repositories, and attempts to address the following questions:

1. What kinds of research output do Studio Art Departments generate?
2. Are institutional records kept for these materials?
3. Are these materials currently being deposited in IRs?
4. How do IRs approach representing and describing the diversity of visual arts documentation?

**Literature Review**

**Issues in Institutional Repositories**

This literature review is divided into two parts. Given the gap in published literature on arts materials in academic institutional repositories with the US, the review first explores relevant issues to studio arts materials in IRs which have been well-researched, including studies evaluating the adaptability and success of IRs in representing non-traditional forms of research, contributors’ participation rates and motivations, and the contribution to be made by IRs to encouraging undergraduate participation in the complete research cycle by publishing their work within the repository. This literature review then examines a body of research conducted in the UK which specifically addressed considerations for representing visual arts materials in digital repositories.

In the relatively short period of time since the introduction of institutional repository software in 2002, literature on this topic has addressed a variety of ways in which IRs may accomplish greater breadth and depth in the scholarly output of academic institutions, as well as greater institutional control over the management and dissemination of digital research materials created by these communities’ members.
This role for IRs was recognized in an influential 2003 report by Clifford Lynch, executive director of the Coalition for Networked Information, which positioned the strategic importance of repositories for scholarly communication as central to the fundamental mission of higher education. Lynch argued that by increasing the variety of publishable materials and giving content creators new avenues for agency, IRs could liberate researchers from dependence on traditional publishing models for disseminating their work.

Early studies (Lynch 2003; Lynch and Lippincott 2005) explored questions about how to define the nature of an IR, and what defines success for an IR. Although stated in broad terms, it is generally agreed that the mission of an IR is to “reflect the range and scope of intellectual output generated by the community of scholars affiliated with any single academic institution,” this still leaves the question of defining materials and participants in order to accomplish this goal (Dubinsky, 2014, p. 2). Given the range of diverse forms of scholarship and creative work which might be included in repositories, determining what research products IRs should include in practice has been a common focus of subsequent studies. What sorts of research materials should repositories strive to collect?

To evaluate the success of IRs as well as to provide suggestions for encouraging increased future contributions by researchers, recent studies have also focused on measuring participation rates within institutions’ scholarly communities, i.e. students and faculty, and have also investigated potential benefits of and barriers to researchers’ participation. Who contributes to the IR? What are the barriers to and motivations for
researchers in contributing materials? Within this body of literature, low rates of faculty participation are a consistent problem discovered in studies measuring faculty contributions to IRs.

Following on McDowell’s (2007) research, Dubinsky’s 2014 study employed a mixed-methods approach to examine repository growth rates and the content of IRs contributed by faculty in Sciences, Humanities, and Social Sciences. This study found a moderate increase in mean and median growth rates over McDowell’s study (Dubinsky, 2014, p. 15). Regarding disparity in deposits across disciplines, Dubinsky reported the persistence of uneven distribution in IR content, with sciences still showing the strongest representation (Dubinsky, 2014, p. 1). However, Dubinsky observed increasing rates within the Humanities and concluded that increasing faculty content within this area “may indicate a slow shift in faculty perception of the value of IR or a growing awareness of an IR as an avenue for the dissemination of scholarship” (Dubinsky, 2014, p. 18). As a limitation of the study for assessing faculty motivations, however, Dubinsky cautioned that this research did not differentiate between passive faculty contributions and active participation by faculty, and was limited to repositories using Digital Commons Software, and (Dubinsky, 2014, p. 18).

Other research has discovered that, despite persistently mixed results in efforts to encourage faculty participation, IRs have fulfilled Lynch’s prediction of expanding the breadth of scholarly materials, and serve particularly well as a dissemination platform for materials “that had been or logically would be deemed unsuitable for ordinary (i.e., paper) publication.” (Royster, 2007) Describing his experience at the University of
Nebraska-Lincoln, Royster points out that one of the surprises he discovered in managing this repository is the enormous popularity of previously unpublishable materials among repository users. Royster provides engaging examples of use cases from the Nebraska repository to demonstrate the potential of unusual materials to fill the research needs of specific interest groups. In one example, a long-anticipated dictionary of invertebrate zoology that had fallen prey to a series of cancellations amid the vicissitudes of university presses was simply digitized and made available in the IR. Due to the authors’ well-connectedness within their discipline, this reference source became one of the IR’s most-downloaded resources.

Royster also discusses how the IR’s ability to provide distinct forms of user interaction by representing resources in multiple formats can be an asset for emerging forms of scholarship which depend on properties beyond plain text. For example, Royster describes an undergraduate project which built a website to reconstruct an international music exposition held in Omaha in 1898. Representing the project in the IR allowed for the creation of multiple points of access to content within the work; the student’s project was offered as both a “flat” version, a PDF which offered illustrations and was fully text-searchable, and as a “zipped” HTML version which could be downloaded in order for a user to reconstitute the original interactive website.

Other recent research connects the role of IRs with the potential for increasing students’ engagement in active learning by involving undergraduates in publishing their own research. In a recent survey of recent developments in changing modes of support within academic libraries for undergraduate student research, Hensley, Shreeves, and
Davis-Kahl (2014) point out that even though their survey did not explicitly include questions about IRs as a publication platform, participants mentioned IRs throughout qualitative responses in the survey, as suitable locations for housing honors theses, symposia materials, journals, and posters.

Elaborating on the appropriateness of IRs for collecting students’ research, Passehl-Stoddart and Monge (2014) detail a range of possible benefits provided by “student-centric” institutional repositories. This paper describes the example of Western Oregon University’s IR, which began in 2011, demonstrating how new and quickly-developing repositories within the academic library and scholarly publishing landscape. The IR is proposed as a tool for increasing students’ confidence and academic investment to raise their overall level of academic performance, by involving students as active participants in the research process and introducing them at an early stage to professional-level participation within scholarly communication. Passehl-Stoddart and Monge emphasize the nature of education as an experimental process, and argue for the use of the IR to provide an accessible and visible location for inclusive publishing of student work, thus expanding opportunities for students to share research beyond limited recognition for the “best and the brightest” within academia (Passehl-Stoddart and Monge, 2014, p. 2). Finally, the authors also suggest that high levels of undergraduate involvement in the IR can build on its own momentum to contribute to diversity within intellectual culture on campus. The authors suggest that increased participation by a range of academic departments within the university in publishing to the IR will increase visibility for those programs within and outside the University, while
simultaneously increasing recognition and comprehension of the IR’s function among key stakeholders (Passehl-Stoddart and Monge, 2014, p. 7).

**Issues for Visual Arts Documentation in Institutional Repositories**

Although an examination of Studio Art materials within IRs would seem to fit naturally within the topics discussed above, as these forms of research might constitute a group of materials previously seen as difficult-to-publish or otherwise outside the traditional boundaries of scholarly work, as yet there has been relatively little research into the inclusion of documentation of visual arts materials by students and faculty in IRs within the United States. A notable exception is Blankenship and Haines’s prescient overview of IRs published in *Art Documentation* in 2008, in which the authors highlight the development of IRs as a point of specific interest for art librarians, emphasizing the ability of these resources to house a variety of materials and to offer needed preservation and access for digital image collections (Blankenship and Haines, 2008, p. 22). The authors also encourage arts librarians to embrace IRs as part of a broader move toward open access publishing for faculty research in the United States, concluding that librarians must be ready to “help arts and humanities faculty members, institutional researchers, and other constituents to preserve their scholarship and to comply with future institutional and organizational mandates.” (Blankenship and Haines, 2008, p. 25).
In the UK, however, a substantial body of research into the development of IRs for visual arts research accumulated as a result of series of projects begun in 2007 and funded as part of the Repositories and Preservation Programme of JISC, a non-profit organization serving in an advisory role for higher education funding in the United Kingdom. JISC’s mission to promote innovation in the use of “information and communications technology (ICT) to support education, research and institutional effectiveness” has led to the organization’s support for repository development for the promotion of research (HEFCE, 2011).

Whereas early studies in the US reveal open-endedness about the question of how to define an IR, interestingly, the UK projects began from a very concrete concept of the repository and conducted a much more fluid investigation into defining the nature of research within it. Along with the aim of building a definition for arts research materials, the JISC-funded projects identified a number of relevant factors to consider for the maintenance and preservation of these materials which result from the specific characteristics of visual art. The most frequently noted of these are: the challenges of adequately representing the salient visual features of arts materials, the collaborative nature of artworks, and questions about metadata formats and implementation.

The first of the JISC-funded studies, the Kultur project, began in March 2007 and ended in March 2009, and was launched for the purpose of “creating a model of an institutional repository for use in the creative and applied arts.” (Kultur-home). The ultimate goal of the Kultur project was “to create a transferable and sustainable institutional repository model for research output in the creative and applied arts, a
discipline area where repository development is so far underdeveloped (Sheppard, 2007, p. 2). Using the repository developed at the University of Southampton as a starting point, the project intended to use this model for developing working repositories at the other project partners: the University of the Arts London, and the University for the Creative Arts at Canterbury, Epsom, Farnham, Maidstone and Rochester (Kultur about). Conceptually, Kultur began from the premise that, at the time of the project’s inception, IRs were designed for and best capable of managing text-based research materials. The Kultur Consortium saw an inherent tension between this text-oriented architecture and history of IRs and the wide range of formats within contemporary artistic production, including many varieties of images and time-based media. In developing a working repository, the consortium intended to expand the options for repository models beyond this limited text-based orientation.

Kultur identified a few necessary areas to address for developing IRs capable of supporting arts materials, including: developing a metadata, preservation, and access framework particularly suited to the context of visual arts, investigating rights issues specific to the complicated nature of visual arts authorship, establishing an “acceptable use model”, and working towards advocacy for the repository—determining how the IR should be managed and promoted, in order to encourage researchers’ participation and contributions of research materials (Sheppard, 2007, p. 2). White and Hemmings also note that a primary technical objective of the KULTUR project was to gather information from potential users in order to develop a metadata system capable of representing artworks with “depth and accuracy” (White & Hemmings, 2010, p. 31). In investigating
these issues, the project produced a large body of primary documents which provided the model for subsequent related JISC projects.

The project’s process included gathering information on users’ experiences with the repository in order to incorporate this feedback into repository development and encourage greater participation in depositing work. Andrew Gray describes the breadth of researchers’ concerns that he uncovered through 15 interviews conducted with researchers at institutions participating in the Kultur project. Gray’s study notes the complexities of balancing contributors’ interest in high-quality images, which necessitates large file sizes for repository administrators to manage, with contributors’ simultaneous concern about possible copyright infringement on creative works that such widely-available images could enable (Gray, 2009, p. 11). The study also points out the importance of in-depth knowledge of original and singular artworks by metadata creators, emphasizing that the contributors themselves may need to be involved for obtaining adequate description, and thus suggesting a strong advantage of self-deposit of visual arts documentation (Gray, 2009, p. 14).

Whereas Kultur offered a first examination of the distinct issues involved in establishing a working model for IRs for visual arts research, the second of the JISC projects, Kaptur, built on this work and conducted a more open-ended investigation into the possibly quite expansive nature of archivable research data produced in visual arts practice. The methodology section of the Kaptur project plan noted that: “Research data in the visual arts mirrors the complexity of the outputs, taking many forms including logbooks, journals, workbooks, sample libraries and sketchbooks” (Kaptur-
about). Like Kultur, this project also attempted to develop and pilot a model for the management of research data which could establish best practices for this subject area (Kaptur-about).

Beginning with an environmental assessment to determine what forms of research data should be taken into account, Kaptur followed Kultur’s precedent in gathering information via formal interviews with practitioners who were both using and generating arts research data in the course of creating their work.

The Kaptur project tested its model in each of the four participating institutions: Glasgow School of Art, Goldsmiths at University of London, University for the Creative Arts, and University of the Arts London (UAL) (Kaptur-about). Within each of the participating institutions, a technical infrastructure was developed to propose a system for research data management (RDM). Institutions created RDM policies, and also began training for staff related to RDM (workshops and development of “toolkits”). From these implementations, each institution produced a case study about RDM in their institution.

In addition to the detailed development of a technical infrastructure, the Kaptur project was also marked by a high degree of interdisciplinarity, which led to a conceptual interest within the project in how the terms framing discussion of research data in the arts might influence participation by researchers in depositing materials. For example, the UAL case study focuses on how adapting a vocabulary closely aligned with the creative process may more effectively engage researchers in RDM collection. A cultural history researcher suggested that using the phrase “archiving the process”
rather than ‘research data’ might align more closely with contributor’s conceptions of artmaking as a process; the phrases ‘documenting the research process’ and ‘visualization and documentation’ were suggested as additional approachable and relatable terms for the visual arts context. Overall, the UAL case study expands considerations of vocabulary in repository development beyond the development of a metadata system for visual arts materials to discuss how terminology is also critically important at the human level of outreach: to engage the community of researchers/practitioners who will be contributing their ‘data’.

Finally, a last repository example from the UK, Goldsmiths Research Online, synthesizes the findings of Kaptur and Kultur and demonstrates how an IR can support users self-archiving arts materials. The GRO project was begun in 2006 with funding from the SHERPA-LEAP project, which was begun in 2002 as a partnership between seven research universities in the UK with the goal of establishing an open access repository. Notably, SHERPA-LEAP later built on the success of the GRO project to establish repositories at several University of London institutions.

An examination by Jacqueline Cooke, an acting librarian at Goldsmiths who had an active role in developing the repository, offers an in-depth look at the GRO model and emphasizes the importance of the commitment to open-access for research in the UK to the development of repositories (2007). Cooke’s report points to open-access requirements for research receiving funding from the UK Research Councils as a major contributing factor to the rapid growth of repositories in the UK (2007). A 2009 report
on GRO confirms that Goldsmiths is considering an OA mandate, influenced by factors such as University College London’s 2009 mandate (Nadim and Cooke, 2009, p. 20).

The experience at Goldsmiths echoes the issues identified in the other UK projects discussed in this review, and demonstrates that achieving a flexible working repository capable of accommodating differences in visual arts materials requires balancing the organizational need for standardization with recognition of and appreciation for the diversity of included materials. Cooke notes the variability in the characteristics of contemporary visual arts practice: a diverse spectrum of materials and processes correlating with a broad range of media and file types, as well as the possibility for many versions of any given work. The official Deposit Guide developed by GRO addresses this variability, and offers substantial details on questions about file naming and preferred formats for images, audio, and video (Deposit Guide- Goldsmiths Research Online, 2012). However, Cooke also reports that while GRO identifies preferred file types as standards for still images, video files are a less settled question, as a result of the need to accommodate the working practices of artists. Thus, although open-source software is preferred for the preservation environment, in practice the repository allows Quicktime and Powerpoint files because of these programs’ wide use among the community contributing video works (Cooke, 2007, p. 6).
Methodology

To gather information about college and university Art Departments’ current collection practices for documentation of artworks created by undergraduate and graduate students and faculty, as well as cooperation between Art Departments and IRs, and how IRs handle deposits of arts materials, two online surveys were designed and administered using Qualtrics Software obtained through the Odum Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The Surveys

This study aimed to gather the perspectives specific to the structure, activities, and histories of both Art Departments and IRs. For this reason, separate surveys were designed and administered to administrators in the Art Department and IR at each of the selected schools. Prioritizing convenience of access for study participants, self-administered, online questionnaires were implemented for both surveys. Survey questions were adapted from previous survey research into relevant issues in institutional repositories, including researchers’ awareness of IRs for preserving content (Covey) and (Lercher 2007), current state of repository contents (Dubinsky 2014), and considerations for representing visual artworks in IRs (Gray 2009).

The survey administered to Art Departments attempted to gather information about the kinds of research products BFA and MFA programs generate. What kinds of materials are BFA and MFA students required to submit in order to graduate? Are programs currently keeping these documents? If so, where are these collections
currently kept? The survey also attempted to gauge Art Departments’ current awareness of and engagement with IRs as a campus resource by determining if art departments are currently working with their IRs to deposit faculty and student work.

The survey of Art Departments was designed to be short and simple to complete within about five minutes. The survey presented participants with fifteen questions, most of which implemented a yes/no answer structure. At the suggestion of an Art Department Chairperson during initial testing of the survey, a “not sure” answer choice was also included for each of the yes/no questions. This survey also included space for free-text entry, in order to augment the inherently limited possibilities for response in yes/no answers. This strategy intended to make the survey expandable if the respondent wished to provide more detailed or qualified answers about practices at their institution.

The survey to IR administrators assessed deposits received from Art Departments, asked participants to provide information on metadata schemas used in the IR, and gathered information about how repositories support digital documentation of artwork in terms of preferred file types, metadata creation and implementation, and setting access conditions for creative work, as well as how IR procedures for Studio Art deposits compare with procedures for submissions from other areas within the Humanities. Questions in the IR survey asked participants to select options from a group of answer choices within each topic, and also provided space for free-text entry.
Distribution

The sample population of this study was determined by cross-referencing the College Art Association’s directory of MFA programs with the Open DOAR directory of open-access repositories in the United States. The Open DOAR directory may be sorted by repository type, and specifies defined benchmarks for included institutions (http://www.opendoar.org/about.html). The CAA is the most prominent national professional membership organization within the field of post-secondary scholarship in art history and visual arts education. The association’s well-attended annual conference is an important event within the academic hiring process for Art Departments, and as a venue for presenting research (College Art Association, 2014). 1 The CAA also contributes to pedagogical practice within academic programs through the organization’s recommendations for Standards and Guidelines for professional practices in art and art history (College Art Association, 2015). 2

Combining the lists of included schools from these two sources generated a list of 85 institutions. Although this approach provided a consistent framework for the sample, it resulted in a list of institutions which favored large research institutions over smaller schools. One drawback of this outcome is that many smaller art schools which

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1 The CAA’s annual report cited over 4,000 attendees at the 102nd annual CAA conference held in Chicago from February 12-15, 2015, with over 200 conference sessions featuring presentation by approximately 800 individuals, including graduate students, independent scholars and professors, artists, and curators. The conference’s career services activities drew onsite participation from 56 employers, with 165 active jobs posted in the online career center during the week of the conference.

2 Best Practices topics include: legal issues, and best practices for teachers, museum and visual resources professionals, and administrators.
merit study were excluded from the sample for the reason that many art schools do not presently have IRs.

For the Art Department survey, in order to identify individuals who could provide information about both undergraduate and graduate degree requirements as well as departmental collection of these materials and current efforts by the Department to work with the campus institutional repository, the Principle Investigator consulted staff web pages for Art Departments and called the departmental offices directly, verbally describing the study’s objectives and procedures, and asking for a recommendation for the contact person best-qualified to supply this information. For the IR survey, the Principle Investigator consulted “Contact” web pages for each IR and used the contact information provided for the IR administrator, either a named administrator or a functional email address.

Total completion rate for the surveys was 22% for Art Departments, or 19 schools, and 26% for institutional repositories, or 22 schools. The number of respondents for each question varied throughout the survey, and is indicated in the results presented below.
Results

Survey of Art Departments

Documentation of Student Artworks

The survey administered to Art Departments began by asking if schools collect research output by students, i.e. documentation of artwork. The College Art Association guidelines for both MFA and BFA programs recommend that institutions keep documentation for both undergraduate and graduate fine art programs, and my survey confirmed that schools are in fact implementing this practice. Of the schools responding, every Art Department reported that it keeps some form of documentation of student artwork, including photographic documentation of BFA or MFA thesis exhibitions, or written theses/artist statements by students.

Documentation of Faculty Artwork

The next section of the survey asked if the Art Department keeps documentation of “artwork or other research activities by Studio Art Faculty (documentation of artworks, exhibitions materials, or written statements)”. 57% of respondents (12 schools) answered yes, 24% (five schools) answered no, and 19% of respondents (four schools) were not sure.

Some respondents used the free-text entry to qualify the function or extent of faculty documentation kept by the department. One respondent noted that faculty documentation is kept for purposes of deciding tenure and promotion, and is not
publicly accessible. Another wrote that the University art gallery keeps documentation of exhibitions, which may include faculty work.

**Figure 1**

**Storage Locations for Documentation of Student & Faculty Artwork**

The next question asked where documentation of student artwork is stored at the respondent’s institution. Participants were instructed to select all applicable locations. By a wide margin, most of these materials are kept within the Art Departments themselves. IRs were among the least-reported storage locations, and in fact no Art Departments reported deposits of faculty artwork to the IR.

91% of respondents (20 schools), indicated that students’ documentation is kept in the Art Department “files in office or Program Archive”. 27% of respondents (six schools) indicated that documentation of student work is kept in the Visual Resources
Center. 18% (four schools) indicated the Art Library, and 14% (three schools) indicated another library on campus. Two respondents (9%) reported that students’ work is held in the Institutional Repository or University Archives. Two respondents also selected the option of “other”, reporting ProQuest and the “University Gallery (within the department)” as the storage locations, and two selected the option of “not sure” about the location of these documents.

In response to a subsequent question about storage locations for collected documentation of faculty work, respondents indicated the following storage locations: Art Department 58% (seven schools), Art Library 33% (four schools), Visual Resources Library also 33% (four schools), not sure 8% (one school). 17% of respondents (two schools) chose “Other”, and supplied the locations of the “University gallery” and “Art Gallery”.

![Figure 2](image-url)
Communication between Art Departments and IRs

The survey next asked if the Art Department is in contact with Library or IR staff about depositing documentation of student work to the digital repository on campus. Yes and no responses were relatively close: 45% of respondents (10 schools) indicated yes, 36% (eight schools) indicated no. A significant percentage of respondents 18% (four schools) were unsure about departmental interaction with the IR.

One respondent indicated that “the Art Department has its own Visual Resource Curator in charge of housing all department documentation, which is made available through an online database accessible for University students, faculty, staff.”

The next question asked if the Art Department is in communication with Library or IR staff for depositing Studio Art faculty work. The numbers here indicated that fewer Art Departments are communicating with IRs to deposit faculty work. 43% of respondents indicated No, and only 29% (six schools) responded Yes. A slightly larger percentage than for the students’ work, 29% (six schools), indicated that they were not sure.
Degree Requirements for Documentation of Student Work

The survey to Art Departments also collected information about whether documentation collected from students to fulfill institutional degree requirements is image-based, text-based, or both.

**MFAs**

Results indicated that all MFA programs require students to submit written documentation; the vast majority also requires image documentation. To the survey’s question about whether MFA degree requirements include that students submit images documenting their artwork, for example documentation of a thesis exhibition, 85% of respondents (17 schools) indicated Yes, and 15% (three schools) indicated No. A separate question asked if degree requirements include that students submit a written
thesis or written artist’s statement/description of artworks. 100% of respondents (20) reported that the MFA program requires written documentation.

**Do Art Departments Collect Documentation for MFA student work?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>documentation type</th>
<th>yes (%)</th>
<th>no (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>image-based documentation</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>text-based documentation</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4

**BFAs**

For BFA students, fewer schools (just under half) require image documentation, and nearly two-thirds of schools require written documentation. The survey asked if degree requirements for either the BFA degree (or, if applicable, a “BFA with honors”/“BFA with Senior Thesis/Capstone Project”) include that students submit images documenting their artwork, for example documentation of a thesis exhibition, in order to graduate. 47% of respondents (nine) indicated Yes, 42% (eight) indicated No, and 11% (two) were not sure. The greater number of respondents who were not sure about the requirements for the BFA degrees could indicate greater clarity or consistency
in the graduate programs’ structures, or may be a result of the position and primary responsibilities of the Department administrators answering the survey, and consequent greater familiarity with the graduate or undergraduate program.

Regarding whether degree requirements for undergraduates include that students submit a written thesis or written artist’s statement/description of artworks, 63% of respondents (12) reported that the BFA program requires some form of written documentation, 16% (three) do not require it, and 21% (four) were not sure.

![Figure 5](image)

**Do Art Departments Collect Documentation for BFA student work?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Image-based documentation</th>
<th>Text-based documentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Specifications for and Variations in Requirements**

The last questions in the MFA and BFA sections of the survey collected more details on the nature of documentation collected for students’ work. The survey asked
if there are any official specifications or guidance from the Art Department determining what students include in their documentation, such as specifications about number of images to include, or length of written work. For MFA programs, 79% of respondents (15) selected Yes, and 11% (two) selected No. Another 11% (two) were not sure. A smaller percentage of programs provide specifications to their undergraduates: 54% of survey respondents (seven schools) reported that the Art Department provides guidance/specifications to BFA students for documenting work. 23% (three) of the respondents reported no departmental specifications, and another 23% were unsure.

![Do Art Departments Provide Official Guidance or Specifications for Documentation of student work?](chart)

Figure 6

Finally, the Art Departments survey inquired if variation existed by medium or program within BFA and MFA degree programs, regarding either written statements or visual documentation as degree requirements, such as, for example, a different set of
requirements for the MFA in Painting vs. the MFA in Photography. For MFA programs, 42% of respondents (eight schools) selected yes (variation exists between degree requirements of different mediums), and 53% (10 schools) selected No. One respondent (5%) was not sure. For undergraduates, there was less variation overall in requirements by medium. 77% of respondents (10 schools) reported no variation by medium/program regarding BFA degree requirements, and 23% of the respondents (three schools) reported some difference between medium/program within the department.

Figure 7
Survey of Institutional Repositories

As described in the Methods section of this paper, requests for participation were sent to the same 85 institutions as the Art Departments survey. From the IR administrators contacted, there were 22 responses total, a response rate of 26%.

Deposits of Arts Materials to Institutional Repositories

Respondents were first asked to indicate which if any types of deposits their IR had accepted from the institution’s Studio Art Department, again selecting all applicable answer choices. The largest percentage, 48% (11 schools), reported receiving deposits of graduate work, with faculty work providing the next largest source of materials at 39% (nine schools), and undergraduate student work at 22% (five schools). 30%, or seven schools, had not received any deposits from the Studio Art Department.

![Bar chart showing deposits of arts materials to institutional repositories.](image)

Figure 8:
Metadata and Arts Materials in Institutional Repositories

Participants were next asked to identify the metadata schema(s) used in their repositories, and were asked to select multiple options if more than one was applicable. The largest percentage, 83% (19 schools) reported using Dublin Core. The next largest percentage, 30% or seven schools, indicated implementing a locally-defined custom schema. One school, or 4% of the respondents, indicated using EAD, MARC, and METS. Seven institutions, 30% of respondents, reported using other metadata schemas; specified schemas in this category included schema.org, VRA and “modified VRA Core”, bepress, and ETD metadata.

![Metadata schemas used in IRs](chart)

**Figure 9**

Respondents were also asked about any specialized metadata implemented for describing Studio Art materials in the IR. The majority, 82% (18 schools), do not implement systems in addition to their IR’s overall schema. Four of the schools,
however, (18\% of respondents) reported implementing additional metadata schemas or specific vocabularies for describing Studio Art materials.

In free-text responses for this question, one institution reported using the Getty vocabularies. Two IR administrators indicated willingness to use specific metadata for visual arts materials as the collection increases and “if it made sense to do so.” A repository administrator at another school provided substantial detail for her IR’s method, which links all fine art materials across the campuses via a consistent subject heading added to each collection item’s metadata. This consistent subject heading provides a way to group the collection of fine arts materials within the university system’s shared database. At this school, students (the creators of the collected artworks) input their own metadata for their works, chosen from LCSH headings as well as uncontrolled keywords that the students come up to represent the specific descriptive needs of their work. This institution reported positively about the students’ metadata contributions for informing “process, theory, and content-related words” about the collection.

The survey then asked who creates metadata for Studio Art submissions to the IR. Responses indicated that most of the metadata creation is done by the content creators themselves for the documented artworks, and by institutional repository staff. 15 schools, 79\% of respondents to this question, reported that the content creator creates their own metadata. Institutional repository staff are the next largest group of metadata creators, at 74\% (14 schools). Among other contributors, the percentages dropped off considerably. 26\% of IR administrators, (five schools) reported that
technical services staff create metadata. At two IRs (11%), the Studio Art Department provides metadata. 5% of responses (1 school) cited the Art Librarian and Other, (in this case, the “committee chair”) as metadata creators.

In free-text responses regarding metadata creators, one IR administrator pointed out that their IR’s policy varies by collection, depending on factors including the preferences of leadership within any given department, but the metadata creation procedure usually combines contributions by the content creator and the IR staff. At another IR, undergraduate student workers enter all metadata based on information provided by content creators. At the university that allows students to include uncontrolled keywords in their metadata, the IR administrator who completed the survey pointed out that the library checks students’ self-cataloging work to ensure quality control; students’ “submissions are not permanently archived until one of two
cataloging librarians approves it.” This IR administrator noted that librarians usually need to do little revision to the students’ descriptive metadata, however. “Usually we’re just adjusting the formatting (where the colon goes, etc.) or spelling.”

The next question asked if the metadata creation procedure for Studio Art submissions is consistent with the procedure used for submissions of work from other Humanities programs. 14 of 18 IRs answering this question (78%) reported that the metadata creation procedure for Studio Art submissions is consistent with other Humanities programs. Three schools (17%) employ a unique metadata creation process for Studio Art materials.

One administrator noted that the entire workflow for Art Department materials “is unique among our graduate programs.” This administrator described their school’s recent transition from print-based collection of MFA theses to students’ self-archiving of
MFA theses in the DSpace repository. Noting the IR’s consultation process with faculty to help coordinate the transition, this administrator observed that the Art Department perceived significant benefits to students as a result of the switch, including a stable URL for locating their work on the Web, and increased access to online materials vs. the school’s prior policy requiring 24 hours’ advance notice for access to print MFA thesis materials.

Another administrator reported that “metadata creation varies somewhat with each collection. Some departments or instructors will require students or contributors to submit keywords and/or abstract, and others do not.” This administrator regarded this variation between departments as an opportunity to offer future encouragement and suggestions about the value of increasing subject access via controlled vocabulary to those departments currently providing less detailed metadata. Two other administrators reported the shared experience of ETD-mediated submissions, in which the school did not play a role.

**Formats and Parameters for Studio Art Materials in the IR**

The next questions addressed whether and how IRs establish specific parameters for contributions of Studio Art materials. First, the survey asked administrators if their IR “has a document specifying file formats/parameters for deposits of Studio Art materials.” 67% of respondents (12 schools) indicated that they do not, while 33% of administrators (six schools) do have such a document.

Four responses stipulated that their IR has a document which specifies formats and parameters for all submissions and therefore includes Art materials within its scope.
One respondent noted that they are currently creating a document specific to parameters for Studio Art materials submissions.

The other question within this category asked how the IR handles time-based artworks. This question asked respondents to indicate all applicable answers from the following possibilities:

- Archive a copy of the entire work: 46% (six respondents)
- Represent the work via still image: 62% (eight respondents)
- Represent the work via a short of specified maximum duration: 15% (two respondents)
- Other

The three respondents who selected the answer choice of “other” provided the following exceptions to these options: “none have ever been submitted” (IR has not
received any submissions of time-based work), “not sure”, and “links out”, presumably indicating that the artist’s record in the IR provides a link to an outside page which hosts the time-based content.

**How do IRs handle time-based artworks?**

![Bar chart showing the handling of time-based artworks by IRs](chart)

**Figure 13**

**Access Conditions**

The final question of the IR survey asked if the repository has a default access condition which is specific to Studio Art Submissions. The vast majority of IRs, 72% of respondents (13 schools), indicated that the default access conditions for Art materials are consistent with all types of research deposits. Three respondents (17%) reported that their IR has a default open-access policy which is specific to Art materials. Two respondents reported a policy for Art materials which allowed the creator to set their own access condition.
In free text responses, respondents mentioned significant flexibility on the topic of embargoes, noting a range of options offered to students, from six months to one or two years, or a permanent embargo option “which is new this year, and has not been heavily used.” One free-text response in particular perfectly represents the dominant themes of flexibility and willingness to adapt IR policies to the needs of collections which was observed in IR administrators’ free-text responses to questions throughout this survey: “We could do something different if there was need.”

Discussion

The results presented in the previous section give a current picture of levels of cooperation between Art Departments and IRs which indicates that there is room for increased outreach by IR administrators to encourage further deposits of studio art materials. These results also show that IRs have so far been able to manage art submissions using already-established policies for other materials, but that administrators are willing to consider modifying established policies to accommodate arts materials as increased contributions generate the need for such revisions. This section presents more detailed consideration of a few topics within these results.
Art Departments collect documentation of student and faculty artwork

My findings show that Art Departments do collect documentation of artwork by students and faculty, and so far, these materials aren’t yet widely deposited to IRs. These findings suggest a need for increasing awareness within Studio Art Departments of the value of IRs for preserving studio art research, in order to encourage submissions of work. As these results also suggest that large collections of analog materials exist at many institutions, possible areas for outreach to Art Departments could include assistance with digitizing older collections of materials, or support for aligning departmental specifications for students’ born-digital materials submitted to fulfill BFA and MFA degree requirements to standards for IR deposits. Given free-text survey responses indicating that Art Departments value the stable URL provided by IRs, education to increase awareness about the preservation value to artists of having archival copies of their work stored in the IR is another possible area for outreach.

Faculty are underserved

Secondly, these findings correlate with previous research by suggesting that at present, Studio Art faculty appear to be under-served by the IR as a campus resource for preserving and providing access to research. In particular, the report from Art Departments showing no deposits of faculty work supports this interpretation, but the responses to the question about received deposits in the IR survey also reported the lowest percentages for deposits of faculty work. This finding suggests that there’s a need to increase outreach to encourage deposits by Studio Art faculty. Efforts to
encourage participation could take place at the departmental administrative level as well as through individual consultations with faculty members. There’s also a need for further research into whether Studio Art faculty members are depositing work independently of departmental involvement.

Outreach opportunities for IR administrators

Lastly, my findings suggest a few ways in which IRs can offer significant value to Studio Art contributors in addition to the obvious benefits of preservation and access. These are: enriched descriptive metadata for arts materials, expanded documentation to provide context for artworks, and support for art students’ professional development activities.

Enriched metadata for visual arts materials

The vast majority of repositories surveyed currently implement the Dublin Core metadata schema, and most did not report implementing specialized metadata for visual arts materials such as the Getty vocabularies. This finding suggests that developing rich, subject-specific metadata records for representing artworks in the repository is an area where art librarians and visual resource professionals can contribute subject expertise for implementing controlled vocabulary within existing schemas, as well as enthusiasm for collaborative efforts to create metadata which reflects the experimental, process-based nature of visual arts practice. In responses to this study’s survey to IR administrators, free-text comments indicated a willingness to incorporate more specific metadata as submissions increase. Because the artists
themselves are frequently involved in contributing metadata for their submissions, collaborative records can combine the advantages of controlled vocabulary and creator-generated keywords, to create detailed descriptions reflecting the diverse range of visual arts practice. IRs can also support expanded context for artworks. One response noted that students often include still images to document their working processes as well as their artworks. The potential for including video files in the repository could provide the additional advantage of time-based documentation for working processes, even for artists whose artworks are still images. Finally, as noted above, one of the IR administrators reported that Art Departments saw significant value in the ability to have a stable URL for including on websites, and applications for grants and residencies. Outreach by IR administrators could investigate how their IR could support efforts by their own institutions’ Studio Art departments to assist art students in building portfolios and other professional development activities.
Suggestions for Further research

The limitations of the scope of this exploratory study point to a few directions for further research, discussed below.

Interviews with content creators

This study gathered information about the practices and experiences of administrators in Studio Art Departments and IRs, thus portraying the current situation at the institutional level. Further research could collect information from the point of view of potential contributors of materials to the repository, i.e. the faculty and student artists who are content creators. Interviews with artists could generate insight into content creators’ motivations for depositing work to IRs, how content creators perceive and describe their needs relating to the representation of their artwork, and what kinds of barriers to participation content creators currently experience. These insights could be helpful in allowing IR admins to better serve users’ needs through more effective outreach to contributors, and could potentially increase the low rates of faculty engagement observed in this study.

Case studies of visual arts materials in repositories

This study did not gather information on variations in visual formats between or within IRs for representing different types of content. Gathering information on current approaches to creating a visual aesthetic in the repository which supports viewing artworks could increase understanding of the importance of visual context for
representing artworks, as discussed by Jacqueline Cooke points out in her article on Goldsmiths Research Online. Given that so many institutions use a limited number of software applications for building their IRs, case studies in this area could provide broadly-generalizable ideas for how institutions can customize widely-used software such as DSPACE to support visual art archiving.

**Collection and documentation practices in smaller art schools**

Lastly, because of the sampling method employed, this study primarily included large research institutions. Looking into the state of collection practices at art schools could provide insight into an important population within arts education. Further research is recommended to determine what kinds of interest or activity exists in art schools relative to IR development, for example, whether there are current initiatives among art schools to start their own IRs, to combine resources between individual art schools or with larger “host” colleges or universities, or to contribute research to subject repositories.
Conclusion

This study attempts to address the gap in research about current practice in documentation for Studio Art materials within academic institutional repositories in the United States. Although published literature on institutional repositories has not yet examined practice within the United States, development of this study benefited from the substantial and extensively-documented body of research in the UK that gathered information from content creators as well as IR administrators via surveys and interviews about relevant considerations for representing arts materials in digital repositories. The UK-based research and currently operational repositories such as Goldsmiths Research Online, which have implemented and adapted the outcomes of the Kultur Consortium and other projects, could also provide models for US institutions seeking to establish best practices for management of visual arts materials in IRs.

The surveys conducted in this study confirmed that deposits to IRs by Studio Art Departments conform to overall patterns within IRs of low contribution rates among faculty. On the other hand, this research also demonstrated that Studio Art Departments currently hold substantial collections of students’ research which could be digitized and submitted to IRs for preservation and increased access. Further research is recommended to increase understanding of the needs of content creators and to examine how IR software could better describe and represent visual arts materials, in order to propose even more specific avenues for supporting visual arts research in repositories.
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