M|I|C/A

Digital Archiving Non-Traditional Art and Design Theses Work

Summary

MICA's Decker Library began accepting and preserving born-digital theses material in 2015. These materials include PDFs, still and moving images, graphics files, interactive media, and more. Workflow, requirements for submission, and platform were put into place by the predecessors of the current Director and Digital Initiatives Librarian. The NDSR Art Resident will research the current landscape and help define best practices for collecting, preserving, and providing access to art and design Master's theses. This project will culminate in a document that will be shared freely online as a model for other libraries to follow (similar to Video At Risk: Strategies for Preserving Commercial Video Collections in Libraries from NYU Libraries).

Currently most libraries collect graduate theses in PDF format and provide access to this content in their Institutional Repository (IR) or other collection management system. Additional media is usually provided on CD or DVD and stored physically, not electronically. This system does not work well in an art and design school context since the vast majority of thesis are not textual, yet this is still currently the practice at MICA and similar institutions. While there are textual elements to all of the thesis work at MICA, the main contribution MICA students are making to the world, their art, is partially hidden from view. This should and could change.

At MICA, there is an increasing amount of students who submit higher resolution digital files made in creative software, such as still images, moving images, graphics files, and interactive media in addition to their PDF thesis. Our students and researchers recognize that flattened images and stills embedded in PDFs are no longer a good substitute for the work. As graduate programs at MICA grow, Decker Library will need to provide better access to these materials. The NDSR fellow will investigate this problem and provide parity between the depth of information shared through textual theses to those which are complex media.

Current digital stewardship of these materials has been a manual process of PDF collection via learning management system, back up to two servers, and uploading to the content management system CONTENTdm for access. Disks, if providing supplemental material, are sent to the library for storage. With new leadership across MICA and a planned reformulation of MICA's entire digital ecosystem, this is the right time to reconsider the methods in which the library handles Master's Theses and create a model in which others could adapt or follow. By providing documentation through the final report, this project will provide a leadership opportunity for the resident and MICA in the area of archiving art and design information assets created by future artists/leaders.

Specific Objectives

The objective is to develop a new model for the collection, long-term preservation, and access of complex digital objects as part of art and design theses work that can be implemented at MICA and replicated elsewhere.

The goals of this project are to:
-Collect and share research about how art and design theses are currently being collected, preserved, and accessed.
-Research how complex digital objects created by students can be appropriately collected, preserved, and accessed in an online environment.
-Create documentation that can serve as a model for MICA and other institutions

wanting to collect, preserve, and provide access to art and design theses.
-Develop new strategies and workflows that can allow institutions to adapt to new technologies.

Decker Library began collecting born-digital graduate theses in 2015. Digital assets currently include born-digital works, time-based media, and interactive media. Additionally, 3D modeling, virtual reality, and other digital assets that are beginning to be adopted need to be considered as part of this project. It's possible that reformatting and migration of complex digital objects from previous submissions could take place by the resident in order to ensure their long-term preservation, however the proposed schedule will likely not allow this and the assumption is this will not happen except in testing.

This project will be practical, hands-on, and collaborative in nature, providing an opportunity for the resident to develop transferable skills that will be beneficial to the resident's career. Not only will the resident be working with art and design information assets, they will be working closely with various offices and library units. The resident will be integrated into the broader work and organizational culture of the institution. It should be noted that while the responsibility for completing the deliverables is the resident's, Ferretti and her team will provide as much guidance, support, and help as appropriate to complete each phase of the work.

After the completion of the project, Decker Library is committed to providing access to reports authored by the resident providing a framework that is replicable at any institution wanting to provide greater access to art and design information assets. Additionally, Decker Library will continue facilitating conversation around this work through promotion of the project online, in articles, and in conferences beyond what is required. MICA understands the significance of the work created by its graduate students and their contributions to fine art, design, and art history. As we discover new challenges to address and continue to iterate on perfecting the created workflows, we will create addenda to the report.

Timeframe & Deliverables		
1. Report on institutional repositories with similar assets	09/28/2018
2. Report from grad program focus groups	11/02/2018
3. Report on best practices for preservation and access to assets	01/02/2019
4. Propose software solutions	03/01/2019
5. Propose workflow for submitting and archiving	03/29/2019
6. Test workflow	04/2019
7. Implement workflow	05/17/2019
8. 1st draft of final report	06/21/2019
9. Final report submitted	End of Residency

1. The project will begin with researching institutions preserving similar assets and an investigation of digital assets already submitted from 2015 to present. The institutions considered in scope for this process will include both art and design schools and institutions with strong art and design programs.

2. The resident will then begin working with directors and students of graduate programs in focus groups to review the gaps between the current process and one which better serves their needs. MICA graduate students, the Graduate Studies office, graduate programs, and Decker Library all experience pain points during the current graduate theses submission process. The resident will identify pain points, areas of need, and other potential requirements in these focus groups.

3.The resident's next task is to look at the best practices for long-term preservation and access of the types of files students are currently using and likely will be using in the future. This may include options such as emulation and give consideration to students' intellectual property as well as general accessibility.

4. The resident will propose new solutions for software acquisition by the library to best fit the needs of the project. Since the college will be in the second phase of redeveloping MICA's digital ecosystem, suggestions should integrate with Drupal and other systems. There should also be multiple suggestions, scaled for type and cost, so that different institutions could more readily use the final report from this project as a guide.

5-7. Once software has been selected, the resident will develop the workflow for archiving new graduate theses submissions. This process will be tested in April 2019 and implemented in May 2019.

8-9. The final report will be written and edited in the last few months of the residency, incorporating the elements created throughout the process. It should provide a framework that is adaptable at any institution wanting to provide greater access to their art and design theses. The resident and Ferretti will also designate conferences, journals, and blogs to apply to for submission about the project beyond what is required.

Context

The mission of MICA is to: EMPOWER students to forge creative, purposeful lives and careers in a diverse and changing world. THRIVE with Baltimore. MAKE the world we imagine.

The tremendous strength and diversity of work completed in the Master's theses should not be hidden in disks behind a locked door. Accomplishing this project will show the promise of our mission.

MICA is undergoing a reformulation of its entire web ecosystem that is taxonomy driven. It is possible for Master's theses to be woven into the new web environment. Instead of being relegated to just an institutional repository, this important art and design information could be brought into context and made more accessible to the public. The work of the resident will create an entirely new way of working for the library, graduate departments, and for the students who are all ready for the process to change.

Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, the resident will contribute to the field of digital stewardship by developing a framework to support true engagement with this material. The vital work of art and design programs deserves to be front and center. Ideally this work will help change the course of how even larger institutions treat their theses. Decker Library strives for a future where institutions allow greater access to work beyond text because they recognize how art and design work is important information.

Required Resources

The resident will be provided with:

-a computer workstation.

-access to the Digital Initiatives Unit's working server and long-term preservation server.

-software such as Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Bridge, Carbon Copy Cloner, and DiskCatalogMaker. Additional software recommendations will be accommodated.

-a MICA email address.

-a MICA phone number.

-business cards.

-assistance from staff on locating affordable housing.

-access to all digitization equipment if needed.

Required Knowledge & Skills

- -basic in-classroom digital preservation knowledge and be prepared and excited to expand their knowledge base by the end of the residency.
- -a familiarity with art and design-based media, such as time-based media, including artworks that use video, audio, and computer-based technologies, as well as still images and Portable Document Format files.
- -an understanding of metadata schemas and intellectual mapping.
- -the ability to determine how to find file information for digital assets.
- -the ability to present to students, staff, and faculty as needed at various times during their residency.
- -exceptional organizational skills, problem-solving skills, attention to detail and accuracy, and the ability to set and keep deadlines.
- -the ability to work flexibly, independently, and collaboratively with colleagues, faculty, and students fostering a collegial work environment that encourages growth, inclusivity, innovation, curiosity, and rigor.

Preferred Knowledge or Experience

- -knowledge or experience making use of line command.
- -web archiving skills.
- -knowledge of institutional repositories and intellectual property, copyright, access, use, and accessibility.
- -a familiarity with emulation.
- -demonstrated experience with promoting social justice, equity, and diversity.