

**Art** | National  
Digital  
Stewardship  
Residency

**MICA**  
**DECKER**  
**LIBRARY** /

**Digital Archiving Non-Traditional Art  
and Design Theses Work**  
**Final Report**

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# Overview

Decker Library's NDSR Art project "Digital Archiving Non-Traditional Art and Design Theses Work" proposed to develop a new model for the acquisition, preservation, and access to art and design theses. This new model would focus on the visual nature of student-produced works and strive to provide access to student work in an authentic, accessible, and discoverable manner. Since 2015, Decker Library has collected PDF/A versions of theses using a combination of Canvas, where students would upload their work, Google Forms where students added required submission metadata, and two servers where the files were backed up. Submission for the 2018-2019 excluded the use of Canvas and instead relied on Google Forms to attach a PDF/A file. Decker Library currently provides access to theses through its Asset Bank instance named MICA Digital Library where. Theses available through the MICA Digital Library are either open access, restricted to on-campus only, or embargoed until a period of five years from the time of submission. Students may submit video, photos, and interactive and 3D media as supplemental media, which are inventoried in a Google Sheet and copied without format migrations. Access copies are stored in metal file cabinets and are available on-site only. This system is not appropriate for art and design schools given that the majority of theses projects are not textual. Thus, the current workflow provides textual explanations of visual art while visual media is not represented as part of the submission on MICA Digital Library and are hidden from view in cabinets.

The goals of this project were 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 improve the collection, preservation, and accessibility of art and design theses.
- Develop new strategies and workflows that can allow institutions to adapt to new technologies.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ferretti, Jennifer, and Heather Slania. *Digital Archiving Non-Traditional Art and Design Theses Work*. Host proposal for 2018-2019 NDSR Art. Maryland Institute College of Art, 2018. [http://ndsr-pma.arlisna.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/MICA\\_NDSRArt\\_ProjectSummaryforApplicants.pdf](http://ndsr-pma.arlisna.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/MICA_NDSRArt_ProjectSummaryforApplicants.pdf)

# Project Design

Decker Library's theses project was divided into four main stages:

- 1. Evaluation of current landscape of electronic theses repositories:** This stage focused on producing a report which would provide background on how universities collect, preserve, and provide access to art and design theses. To write the report, I conducted a literature review, which consisted primarily of scholarship produced from 2009 to 2018 on the subject of electronic theses and dissertations in regards to "their value to an institution, its authors, and researchers; the push for open access; and the libraries' responsibility for providing guidelines for graduate students".<sup>2</sup> To assess how similar institutions stewarded art and design theses, I created a survey that was sent out to the ARLIS/NA listserv and which gathered twelve responses. Additionally, I accessed five institutional repositories, digital collections, and library websites to identify the type of documentation available online, determine the general process for submitting theses, what software was used, and what access conditions existed for these collections. I also conducted informal interviews with librarians at some of these institutions to gather data that was not present online.
- 2. Focus group sessions with project stakeholders:** During this stage of the project, I collaborated with the Graduate Studies Department to create a survey for program directors that helped us get a sense of the components present in thesis projects and the relative importance or value of these components. Based on these responses, I collaborated again with Graduate Studies to develop focus group questions. Graduate Studies included my focus group session in small director meetings, where I was able to speak with program directors directly during three 30-minute sessions.
- 3. Documentation for best practices for digital preservation of art and design theses:** During this stage, I focused on creating documentation for use by students and faculty as opposed to the documentation produced during the first and second stages, which was aimed at information professionals.
- 4. Proposal of workflow for acquisition, preservation, and access:** In order to produce a workflow proposal, I analyzed the current digital infrastructure at Decker Library and the staff that would be involved in implementing the new workflow. Since Decker Library implemented a new Digital Asset Management software, Asset Bank, I used their documentation to learn how to conduct processes like batch ingest and batch metadata updates. Arthur Soontornsaratool, Decker Library's Digital Projects Specialist, was also a resource during this phase as he had been part of the team that migrated Decker's digital assets from ContentDM to Asset Bank in 2018.

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<sup>2</sup> Fontánez Rodríguez, Cristina. "Archiving Art and Design Theses: Report on Institutional Repositories." Baltimore, MD: National Digital Stewardship Residency for Art Information, Maryland Institute College of Art, February 14, 2019.  
[https://assets.mica.edu/files/resources/ndsr\\_art\\_mica\\_fontanez\\_rodriguez\\_2019.pdf](https://assets.mica.edu/files/resources/ndsr_art_mica_fontanez_rodriguez_2019.pdf).

- 5. Implementation of workflow:** This phase of the project hasn't occurred, but is expected to roll out in phases, beginning in Spring 2020.

## Modifications to the original proposal

During my initial planning meeting with Jenny Ferretti, where we outlined goals and deadlines for each deliverable, we decided that it would not be feasible to implement the new thesis acquisition workflow for the end of the 2019 Spring term. This decision became even clearer as I realized the level of collaboration with Graduate Studies Staff and program directors that was needed to acquire accurate portrayals of the work that MICA's graduate students produce.

Keeping in mind the conversations with Graduate Studies staff and program directors as well as the amount of time I had invested in writing and revising the first two deliverables, I proposed to my supervisor that, instead of drafting another report, I create a resource for immediate dissemination to faculty and students. The reasoning behind this was that MICA's graduate students work with an immense variety of media so researching and writing about best practices for preservation of each type of media would take up too much time from other practical tasks like developing a workflow. Likewise, program directors mentioned several times that they were unsure as to how students would document all the components in a single project and that students often grapple with conflicting deadlines as their graduation date nears. Lastly, in order for the new theses model to be successful, the materials documenting these projects needs to be created by the students, and this documentation needs to be built throughout their time at MICA. Thus, I decided that a resource that allowed them to have a basis for creating, as well as preserving, this documentation would be a better investment of my limited time at Decker Library and would allow students to see and utilize products of my NDSR Art residency immediately as most graduate programs are designed to be completed within one to two years.

# Intended results

## Summary of Project Deliverables

Deliverable	Description	Status
Report on institutional repositories with similar assets	Research institutions preserving similar assets. The institutions considered in scope for this process included both art and design schools and institutions with strong art and design programs.	Completed Available at: <a href="https://assets.mica.edu/files/resources/ndsr_art_mica_fontanez_rodriguez_2019.pdf">https://assets.mica.edu/files/resources/ndsr_art_mica_fontanez_rodriguez_2019.pdf</a>
Report from grad program focus groups	Focus group sessions with internal stakeholders, primarily program directors.	Completed Available at: <a href="https://assets.mica.edu/files/resources/2nd-deliverable_final.pdf">https://assets.mica.edu/files/resources/2nd-deliverable_final.pdf</a>
Report on best practices for preservation and access to assets	Identify 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.	Reframed as Personal Digital Archiving resource Available at: <a href="https://sites.google.com/mica.edu/personaldigitalarchiving/home">https://sites.google.com/mica.edu/personaldigitalarchiving/home</a>
Propose software solutions	Propose new solutions for software acquisition by the library to best fit the needs of the project.	Included in the complete project report submitted to Decker Library, which will be available on <a href="#">Decker Library's Projects and Publications Page</a> after the end of the residency.
Propose workflow for submitting and archiving	Develop the workflow for archiving new graduate theses submissions.	Completed. See Appendix A.
Testing	Test proposed workflow.	Completed
Implementation	Implementation of workflow with new cycle of theses	Incomplete

	submissions.	
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## Project Partners

The following are the people that contribute to the planning and execution of this project:

- Jenny Ferretti, Digital Initiatives Librarian, Decker Library
- Heather Slania, Library Director, Decker Library
- Arthur Soontornsarathool, Digital Projects Specialist, Decker Library
- Stacey Salazar, Interim Associate Dean for Curriculum and Assessment, MICA Graduate Studies
- Gwynne Keathley, Vice Provost, MICA Graduate Studies

## Project Execution

### Core Deliverables and Activities

Activities	Description	Status
<b>Report on institutional repositories with similar assets</b>	<b>Research institutions preserving similar assets. The institutions considered in scope for this process will include both art and design schools and institutions with strong art and design programs.</b>	<b>Completed</b>
Develop Framework for evaluating institutions		Completed
Develop Google Form Questionnaire		Completed
Send out questionnaire to ARLIS/NA listserv		Completed
Identify institutions for report		Completed
Write literature review		Completed
Interviews with art and design librarians		Completed

Deliver narrative component		Completed
Share out report on ARLIS/NA listserv		Completed
<b>Report from grad program focus groups</b>	<b>Focus group sessions with internal stakeholders, primarily program directors and graduate students.</b>	<b>Completed</b>
Determine session size		Completed
Develop outreach plan		Completed
Perform outreach		Completed
Develop questions for focus group		Completed
Conduct sessions		Completed
Meetings with individual stakeholders		Completed
Compile information and write narrative component		Completed
Share out report on ARLIS/NA listserv		Completed
<b>Report on best practices for preservation and access to assets</b>	<b>Identify 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.</b>	<b>Reframed as Personal Digital Archiving resource</b>
Create Google Site		Completed
Share Google Site with Graduate Studies		Completed
<b>Propose software solutions</b>	<b>The resident will propose new solutions for software acquisition by the library to best fit the needs of the project.</b>	<b>Not completed as individual deliverable. Included in final report.</b>



<b>Propose workflow for submitting and archiving</b>	<b>Develop the workflow for archiving new graduate theses submissions.</b>	<b>Completed</b>
Create wireframes		Completed
Develop workflow		Completed
Create step by step guide for acquisition, accession, ingest, and description		Completed
Testing		Completed
Develop documentation strategy		Not completed
Identify test theses		Completed
Conduct testing		Completed
Implementation of workflow		Not completed

## Project Results

All products created during this residency are available under a Creative Commons license at [Decker Library's Projects and Publications page](#). Ultimately, the project will culminate in a report that will hopefully serve as a framework for other institutions embarking on similar projects. In order to accomplish the overarching goal of this project, which was to develop a new model for the acquisition, preservation and access to art and design theses, I used the data gathered during my first months of research to create a workflow for archiving art and design theses at Decker Library, which is described below.

### Workflow for Archiving Art and Design Theses at Decker Library

The proposed workflow is divided in five main phases:

- Deposit
- Accession
- Ingest
- Description
- Quality Assurance

The workflow has a focus on tools already in use at MICA, with a few additional tools, which are outlined below. The labor is divided between two Decker Library departments: the Digital Initiatives Unit and the Resource Description Department. A chart summarizing the process of acquisition, accession, ingest, description and QC is outlined in Figure 1. The complete

workflow will be available on Decker Library’s complete project report, which is expected to be published by September 2019.

## Tools Used

**Acquisition:** Google Forms

**Accession:** Google Forms , Archives Server

**Ingest:** Archives server, FileZilla, Asset Bank

**Description:** MS Excel, Text Edit, Google Sheets, Asset Bank

**Quality Control:** Asset Bank

## Acquisition, Accession and Processing Workflow for Digital Theses

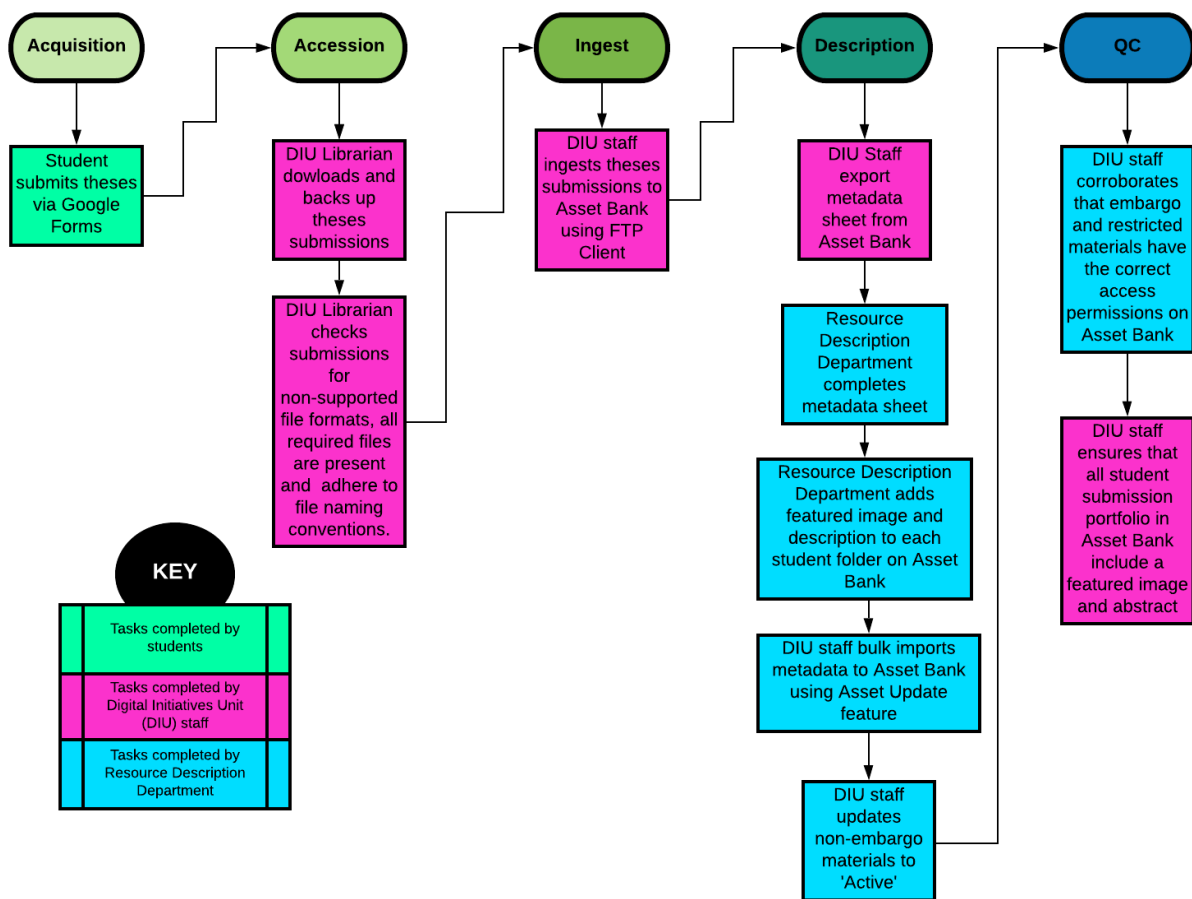


Figure 1: Workflow chart for Acquisition, Accession and Processing Workflow for Digital Theses.

This workflow allows students to submit different types of media at once while allowing librarians ingesting and describing these projects to perform bulk activities and retain the file structure and context of the projects. Below are wireframes depicting how these projects will look like once the new workflow is implemented.

1. Current view of digital theses collection on MICA Digital Library.

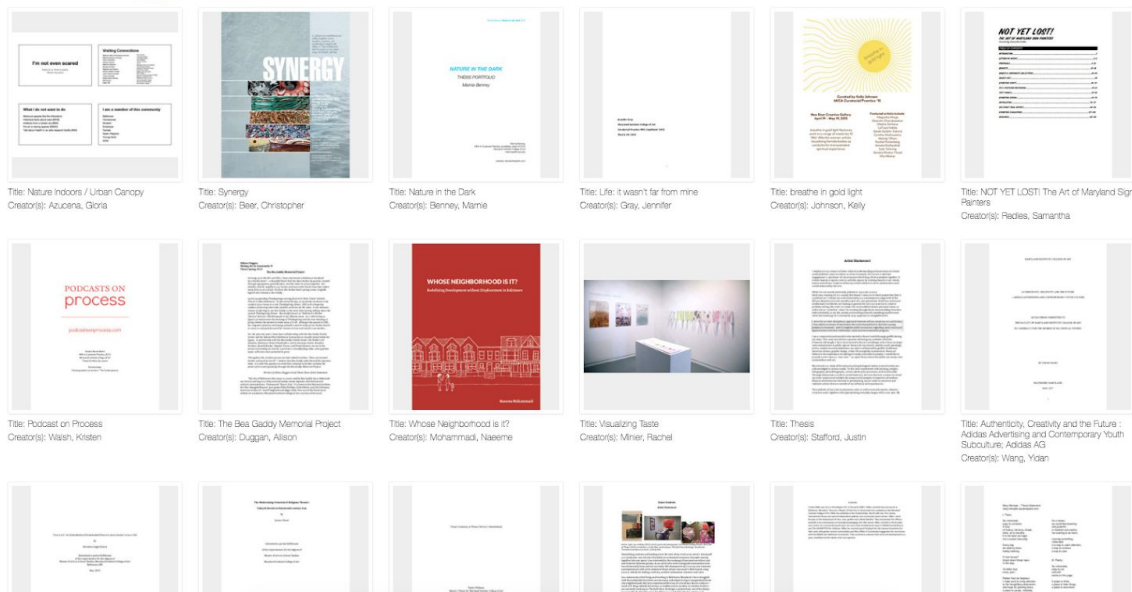


Image 1: Screen capture of MICA Digital Library

2. Using the new workflow, submissions will be ingested as portfolios and students will be required to submit a featured image in order to make the platform visually appealing to users. These submission will be arranged by program and then author.

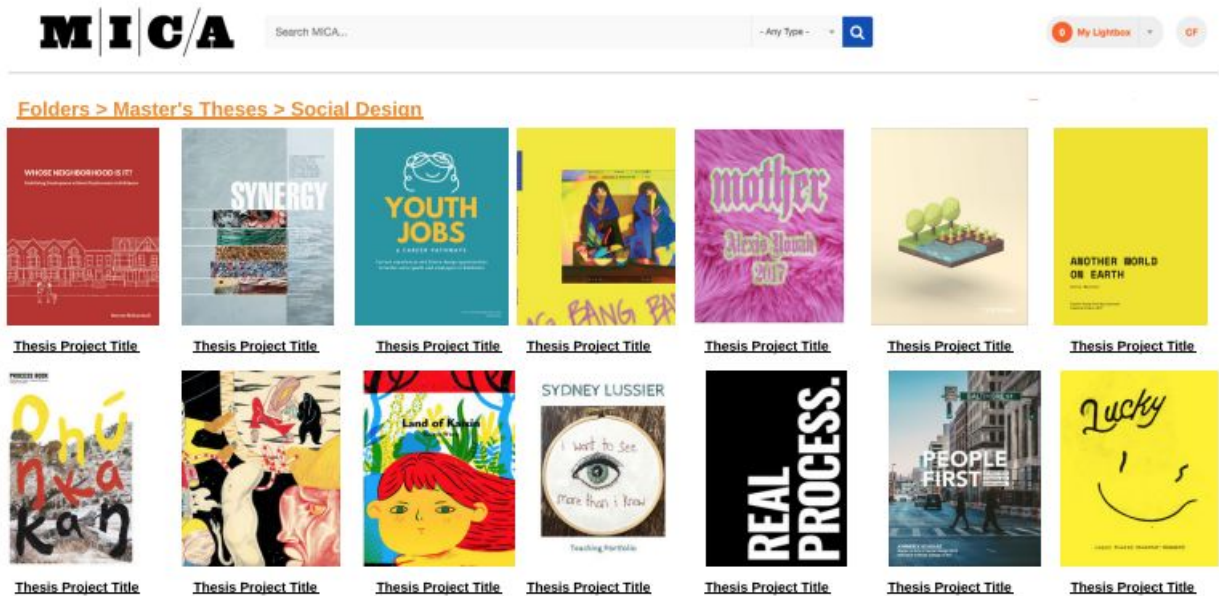


Image 2: Program view of theses collections.

- Once a user clicks on a thesis submission, they will have access to all the media submitted. This view will allow Decker Library to represent and relate all components without hierarchy, instead relating items as peers. Consequently, if users were to stumble upon a single asset in a search, they would be able to view a thumbnail of each related asset, which would minimize the chance that a single asset may be misconstrued as a complete thesis submission.

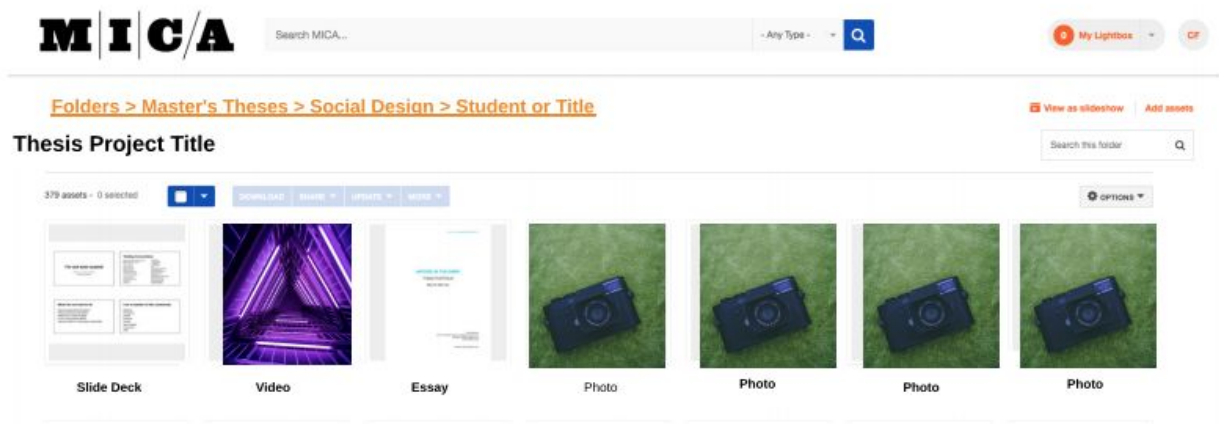


Image 3: Theses collections project view.

## What's next?

While the new workflow is ready for implementation in the technical sense, a larger framework of collaboration between Graduate Studies and Decker Library must be established in order for graduate students to creatively document their work. Conversations around how Graduate Programs may benefit from incorporating documentation skills into the curriculum are already underway. The Graduate Studies Department is embarking on a project that will assess all theses components and identify those that are arts-based, experiential, or research-based and which of those are essential for submissions that represent the breadth and quality of work produced by MICA graduate students. This next phase will use my NDSR Art project deliverables, especially the new workflow for archiving theses as a tool in the backward planning and designing of curricula that provides space for the development of robust, layered submissions that are built continuously throughout a student's time at MICA, that reflect the high quality work that our students already produce, and that are supported by Decker librarians through resources such as the Personal Digital Archiving Website, workshops, and courses on archiving art information.

# Professional Development

## I. Conferences, Symposiums, and Talks

Conference	Location	Date	Presentation Title	Note
iPres International Conference on Digital Preservation	Boston, MA	September 24th -27th, 2018	“Preservation and access to non-traditional art and design theses work”	Portico Sponsored Registration Award
Our Common Code: Ethics in the Archives (New England Archivists)	Boston, MA	October 26th, 2018	“Towards institutional access: Promoting internal conversations around digital media in a museum and a fine art and design college”	Presentation with NDSR Art resident Jean Moylan
Creating Community Through Digital Futures	Chicago, IL	October 1st, 2018	n/a	Event organized as part of Chicago NDSR Art Enrichment Session
Digital Library Federation Forum	Las Vegas, NV	October 15th-17th, 2018	n/a	Attended sponsored by Museum Cohort Complementary Membership Award
ARLIS/NA Mid-Atlantic and Southeast Joint Chapter Meeting	Richmond, VA	November 17th, 2018	Are “Supplemental Materials” Supplemental? Preservation and Access to	

			Art and Design Thesis Work	
NDSR Art Site Visit: Guggenheim Library and Archives, Whitney Museum, Small Data Industries	New York, NY	January 30th - February 1st, 2019		
Safeguarding and Activating Digital Video Information in Cultural Institutions	New York, NY	January 1st, 2019		Event organized as part of New York NDSR Art Enrichment Session
Preservation and Archiving Special Interest Group	Mexico City, Mexico	February 12th - February 14th, 2019		
ARLIS/NA Annual Meeting	Salt Lake City, Utah	March 26th - March 30th	Developing Cross-Institutional Digital Preservation Strategies for GLAM Assets	
APEX and Preservation Programs in Latin America	San Juan, Puerto Rico	May 28th, 2019		
Archival Found Footage and the Arts	San Juan, Puerto Rico	May 29th, 2019		
The Art of Digital Stewardship: Content, Context, and Structure	Baltimore, MD	June 28th		NDSR Art capstone event

## II. Workshops Attended

Workshop Title	Location	Date
Enrichment session: Project Management	Webinar	September 7th, 2018
Applying Radical Empathy Frameworks in Archival Practice	Webinar	September 17th, 2018
Preservation of a Collaborative Community-Based Virtual Reality Collections	iPres. Boston, MA	September 24th, 2018
Digital Curation Workflows Based on Open-Source Software	iPres. Boston, MA	September 24th, 2018
Human Scale Web Collecting for Individuals and Institutions	DLF Forum. Las Vegas, NV.	October 14th, 2018
Enrichment session: Wikidata for Digital Preservation	Webinar	October 23rd, 2018
Home Movie Digitization	Mid-Atlantic Regional Moving Image Archive Archives. Baltimore, MA	December 7th, 2018
NDSR Art Enrichment Session: A/V Preservation and Metadata	Webinar	January 23rd, 2019
NDSR Art Enrichment Session - Strategies for Archiving Ephemeral Art	Webinar	February 28th, 2019
NDSR Art: Let's Talk.... Cover Letters/Resumes/Conferences	Webinar	March 14th, 2019
NDSR Art Enrichment Session: TBM Conservation at AIC	Webinar	May 8th, 2019

Preservation and Digitization with Low Cost Equipment	San Juan, Puerto Rico	I attended this workshop as part of a work trip with NYU Moving Image Archiving and Preservation <a href="#">2019 Audiovisual Preservation Exchange</a>
NDSR Art Enrichment Session: Disk Imaging	Webinar	July 9th, 2019