

Art in the Park

The Culture of Art Acquisition,
Exhibition, and Promotion in
Central Michigan University's Park Library



Laura Thompson and Janet Danek



Art is not a thing; it is a way.

—Elbert Green Hubbard

To evaluate our art and exhibits program as compared to our peers, we sent a survey consisting of 11 questions related to art collections and exhibitions in academic libraries to a sampling of academic libraries in the U.S. and Canada. The survey was designed to gather general data, and was not meant to be comprehensive. Some of the responses will be shared in this presentation to illustrate a variety of ideas.

Why art in a library?

Our intent is to illustrate possible answers to this question as we discuss how our art and exhibits program contributes to *sustainability and growth of art and culture in the Park Library.*





Park Library — 205,000'sq.
including the Clarke Historical Library
which is 18,220'sq.

Survey:
Student study space that doubles as gallery space so students are in an environment of art as part of their regular lives.



How does the art and exhibits program contribute to *sustainability and growth of art and culture in the Park Library?*

By making art integral to the library experience.



The CMU Art Collection is exhibited throughout the library in public spaces.



Survey:
...space dedicated to exhibiting the visual art collection; this is relatively new and allows us to get cultural heritage certification in order to issue tax receipts for donations.



Baber Room — fine art

The library has several spaces dedicated to art and interpretive exhibits which are changed regularly.





Survey:
*The works are from students ...
who have submitted their works ...
to an annual competition held by
the Libraries. The works admitted
to the show are hung in gallery
spaces throughout our libraries.*



**Extended Hours
Study & Student Gallery**
Primarily features student work
and community exhibitions.





Third Floor

Features traveling, student and faculty art and interpretive exhibitions.





Fiber Art Gallery

Features artworks in a controlled lighting environment to reduce damage.



**Denison Collection
of Native American Art**
A series of secure cases featuring
these artifacts from the Clarke
Historical Library's collection.





Clarke Historical Library Exhibit Galleries

We design two exhibits each year which interpret themes relevant to the Clarke's special collections. Several speakers and events are designed to enhance and expand the outreach of the exhibits.



All spaces are multifunctional

The Baber Room Art Gallery is also a quiet study space, often reserved for poetry readings, receptions and student events. Wherever you are located in the Park Library, you experience art.







How does the art and exhibits program contribute to *sustainability and growth of art and culture in the Park Library?*

by building relationships through
—Outreach & Collaboration—

Survey:
We have partnered with area repositories...by loaning objects for exhibitions. We have also brought a “pop-up library” to area institutions for special events.

Collaborations...

- Art faculty & exhibiting artists
- *International Children’s Book Read-In*
- *Kids & Culture Days, community arts groups*



Survey:
We see our exhibits program as part of the Library's overall outreach efforts; i.e. to work with campus collaborators (faculty, students, university programs, artists) to communicate ideas and knowledge and encourage reflection and further discovery. Our exhibits often are accompanied by widely publicized special lectures or other programs to encourage interaction with the given display.



Collaborations...

- Geode exhibit, Geology Department
- *Art Walk Central*, community-wide art competition
- Veteran's Day exhibit, Traveling Michigan Military Museum



Survey:
Gallery events (lectures, openings) are open to the public and listed in local arts calendars and on the university's calendar. ...we often are able to build class visits into events, and share exhibition information with faculty that are teaching classes related to any themes/subject matter in the current exhibition....All of our guest speakers offered workshops and studio visits, two presented workshops that were open to the public,...



Collaborations with...

- Special projects bring in a new audience and build awareness of library offerings.



Survey:

...an impact statement:

The...Exhibit Program connects...

collections, ...scholarship and programming, and the greater community through experiential learning and visual engagement.

This promotes [our] role as a campus and community gathering space, as well as providing an initiative found in all premier academic university libraries.

Through images, text, artifacts, artworks, and multimedia

...Exhibits communicate the thesis of an exhibition and creates aesthetically interesting spaces.

Building the Art Collection

Mission Statement

As the collection and personel evolves and changes, the mission statement aids in guiding decisions and maintaining the established vision.

Survey:
75% of responses said they do not have an established mission statement.

CMU Librairies Art Collection Mission Statement

The new Park Library is primarily intended to serve as a center for information services in support of the academic mission of Central Michigan University. However, it also provides opportunity for the allied purpose of **enhancing the campus cultural environment** for students, faculty, and staff, as well as community library users, by serving as a setting for works of art. It is, therefore, a goal of the Libraries to **present artworks that will stimulate thought, creativity, and appreciation and be a source of inspiration** for the campus and the surrounding community. Such artworks may be part of the Libraries' own collection, part of organized exhibits, or on loan as individual works.

The art purchased for the Collection may be in a variety of formats such as, but not limited to, ceramics, paintings, prints, drawings, photographs, textiles, sculpture, and electronic creations. There is no single theme to the Collection. The Collection represents the variety of approaches, from serious to whimsical, manifest in artistic creations and contributes to the artistic and educational mission of the University.

Survey:

...Libraries has an Art Advisory Committee composed of 6-7 staff members from the libraries who volunteer to serve 2 year terms on the committee."

Survey:

We have a College Art Committee that oversees questions about the art collection and possible gifts. The committee includes a reference librarian, our Archivist, our Graphic Designer, and a library staff member with gallery experience.

Building the Art Collection

Funding: *Friends of the Library, & art endowments*

Art on Campus Committee

Maintains excellence and vision, and promotes collaboration across departments. Committee members are from Art Department, Provost Office, Dir. of Facilities, Library Exhibits Coordinator.



Survey:

We encourage every artist who exhibits to donate a piece to the library.

Survey:

The library does not actually purchase or provide art. We just provide gallery space in our building.

Survey:

The library holds an annual Library Art Purchase Award, where we buy student art up to \$1000.

Building the Art Collection

Support curriculum

— Purchase art from graduating students

Support faculty

— Purchase from Art Department faculty

Outreach

— Purchase from local community and exhibiting artists



Survey:

Our library has an Archives and Special Collections department and that is where the artworks are taken care of. We have archivists and one museum professional working in the department.



Survey:

The connection with our art museum has been crucial to all of our endeavors with art in the library.



Maintaining the Art Collection

Commitments:

- Art storage
- Art preparation room
- Student workers



Survey:

We have one part-time exhibits and programming coordinator. She is supported by an Art in the Libraries Committee consisting of librarians, library staff, and School of Art & Design faculty.

Survey:

Library director/curator manages the art and exhibitions with help from library staff. This is aside from other duties.

Maintaining the Art Collection

Commitments:

- Exhibit coordinator staff position
- Museum Studies students internships



Survey:

The library has professional staff, headed by me (Director of the Art Library, PhD in Art History) and supported by various other colleagues, for all of whom the management of art acquisition and exhibitions are part-time work. The Museum has full time staff, supported by part-time students and volunteers.

Maintaining the Art Collection

— Museum Studies workshops





Standardize Promotional Materials

Consistency with what materials are used and when they are launched - *build anticipation*. Many no-cost promotion platforms exist.

CMU Facebook

CMU Library Facebook

CMU Library website homepage & exhibits page

CMU Calendar

Twitter

Instagram

Digital Message Boards

Print/mailed postcard

Print posters

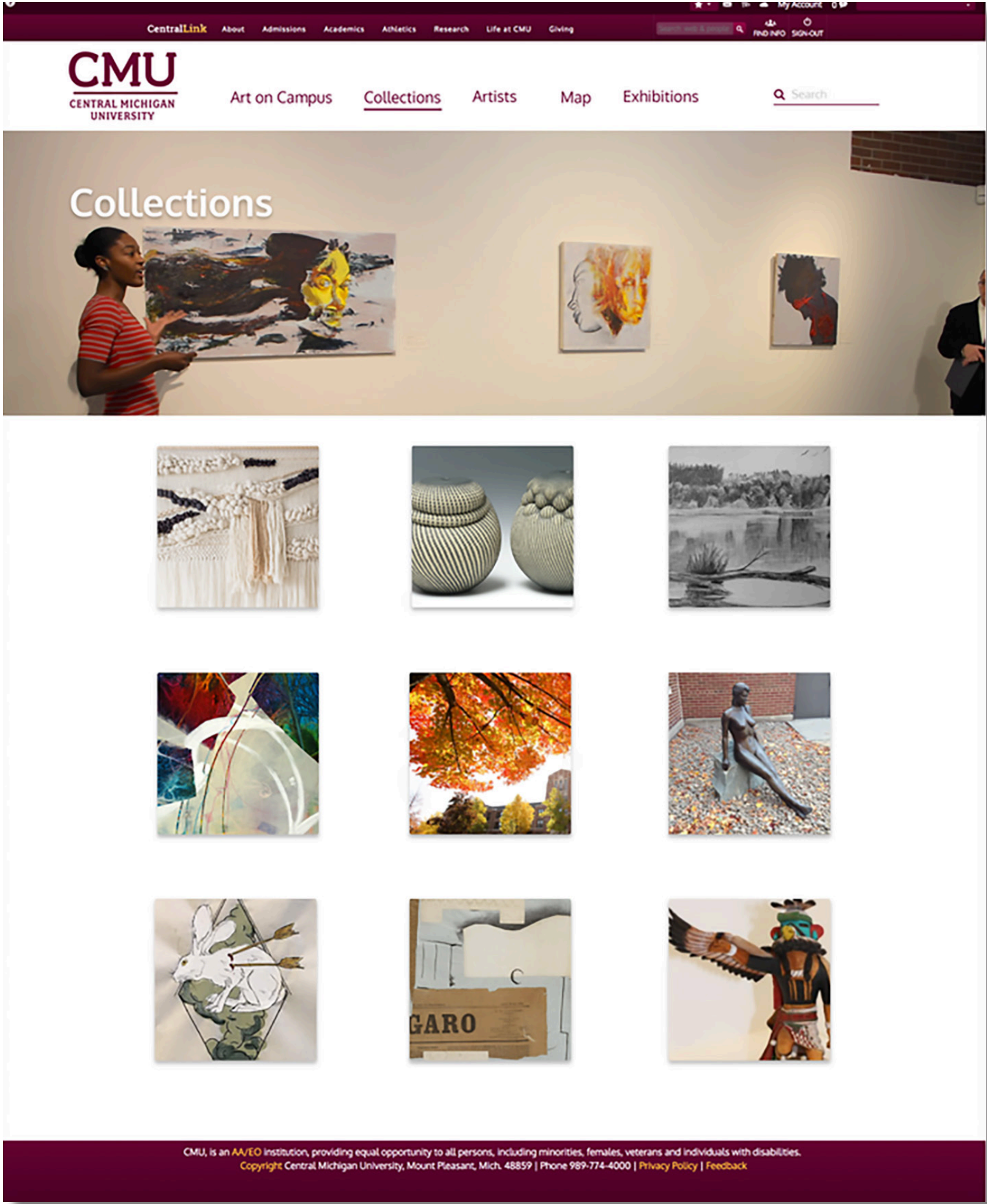
Local newspapers - print & online

MacTV Network - MidMichigan Cable Consortium

Art on Campus Website

— in development —

Provide external access to CMU art collection for educational and outreach purposes.





Volunteers

We could not do what we do
— without them.



Does your library exhibit fine art?

Does your college or university offer an art major or an advanced art degree?

The fine art exhibited is: from your collection? visiting artists? other?

The artists represented by the art exhibited include...?

Are the art exhibits periodically changed or are they permanent?

Does your library have a gallery and/or wall space dedicated to art exhibits?

If you actively add art to your collection, how does your library acquire artworks?

Survey Responses

Michigan Academic Libraries

Art Collections and Spaces

- Two have a library art collection
- Artwork includes student work, outside artists, and works from art department
- Two have no dedicated space for exhibiting art

Acquisition

- Two libraries actively purchase art
- *Friends of the Library*, student art competition
- Committees for approval of acquisition or exhibition

Does your library have staff dedicated to the management of art acquisition and exhibition?

Does your library have an established mission statement to guide the stewardship of art in the facilities?

What approval process is in place for art acquisition and/or guest artist exhibitions?

Does your library offer art outreach efforts through collaboration in the campus and outside community?

Survey Responses

Michigan Academic Libraries

Personnel

None of the institutions that responded have a staff member who's primary responsibility is management of art & exhibits. Anyone who performed the work did it in addition to their primary job.

Outreach

- Working with and exhibiting outside artists (community)
- Working with campus art departments and exhibiting student art
- Enhancing curriculum with exhibits or using exhibition for outreach to outside organizations

Why art in a library?

Survey response:

—The Art Collections and Exhibitions Department manages a thriving exhibition program in the art gallery, which is located in the library. Exhibitions and educational programs are often tailored to enhance curriculum or to provide outreach for various community groups. The department often collaborates with outside organizations for exhibitions and educational programs. The exhibitions are designed to support and encourage minority and emerging artists whenever possible, and to educate and inspire visitors of all age groups, backgrounds and ethnicities.

—anonymous Michigan academic library



Thank you for your time, interest and questions.

If you would like a copy of the survey questions & answers, please send a request to either of the email addresses listed below. The institutions that responded will not be identified.

danek1js@cmich.edu
thomp41@cmich.edu

*A room hung with pictures is a room
hung with thoughts.*

—Joshua Reynolds

