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## Impact of an Institutional Repository on Viewers' Experiences of a Student Art Exhibition

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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Impact of an Institutional Repository on Viewers' Experiences of a Student Art Exhibition

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Since 2014, Boise State University's institutional repository (IR) has included artwork from Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) exhibitions. This paper explores how the experience of viewing artwork at an in-person BFA exhibition differs from that of viewing an online representation of it, makes recommendations to increase viewer engagement with online representations of artwork, and suggests ways that online exhibitions can enhance in-person viewing.

**Method:** The authors conducted two surveys, one of in-person exhibition attendees and one of online exhibition viewers. Fixed-answer results were analyzed quantitatively, whereas an inductive qualitative coding process was used to analyze survey comments.

**Results:** In-person participants were more likely to view all the artwork, spend more time at the exhibition, and view individual artwork for longer. Online participants were more likely to view artists' statements. Online survey participants who attended the in-person exhibition preferred the in-person exhibition.

**Discussion:** Results point toward a need to increase online viewers' engagement with exhibition artwork, many of them centered around improving the usability of the IR interface. Finally, several benefits of the online environment are noted.

**Conclusion:** Although the online representation of the art exhibition in the IR is not a complete replacement for the in-person exhibition, it is a representation that the authors believe can positively influence a viewer's experience of the BFA exhibition, whether they have viewed the in-person exhibition or not. Respondents' comments in both surveys provided suggestions for improving the two exhibitions, as well as insights into how IR exhibitions enhance the in-person exhibition experience.

**Keywords:** institutional repositories, art exhibitions, art exhibits, viewing art online, online exhibits, academic libraries, visual art, library collaborations

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## IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

1. Online art exhibitions lack the built-in opportunities for social engagement that are inherent in in-person exhibitions. Managers of art exhibitions in institutional repositories (IRs) should seek ways to enhance opportunities for engagement such as enabling the comments feature.
2. In order to provide online viewers a sense of the gallery space, gallery shots as well as close-ups should be included in online representations of art exhibitions in IRs.
3. An improved and fuller viewer experience in the IR would result from the inclusion of video or audio clips if they were part of a student's artwork.

## INTRODUCTION

The central mission of the art department at Boise State University “is to provide students with the requisite technical skills and theoretical knowledge for competitive and successful careers as professional artists, art teachers, art historians, graphic designers, and illustrators” ([Department of Art, Design & Visual Studies, 2018](#)). Visual Art Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) students prepare for these future roles through classroom instruction, studio courses, and displaying creative projects in exhibitions. Each fall and spring semester at Boise State University, graduating Visual Art BFA students display their work in art galleries on campus as part of the course ART 490 BFA Exhibition. Beginning in spring 2014, ART 490 students began submitting digital images of their BFA Exhibition artwork—along with associated metadata such as a description, an artist's statement, and keywords—directly to ScholarWorks, Boise State University's institutional repository (IR), which showcases the scholarly and creative works of faculty, staff, and students. Adding works from the BFA Exhibition to the IR preserves images of the artwork and provides students with a permanent uniform resource locator to their work.

The authors conducted a survey of attendees at the opening reception for the Fall 2016 BFA Exhibition. This was followed in the spring of 2017 by a survey of viewers of an online representation of the same exhibition in the IR. Authors investigated the survey responses to determine how the online exhibition potentially enhanced the viewing of the in-person exhibition. Findings from the study are presented along with suggestions for improving in-person art exhibitions and online art exhibitions using IRs.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The authors looked at art and library literature related to the development of IRs for the visual and creative arts in the UK and in the US and related to the experience of viewing art exhibitions.

Several projects in the UK address the development and enhancement of IRs for the creative and visual arts. The two-year Kultur Project involved the creation of a multi-media model for arts-based IRs in higher education (Gray, 2009). Subsequently, the Kultivate project examined ways to increase arts research in IRs with recommendations that include making repositories visually appealing, improving search engine results, updating terminology, and improving the deposit process for artists (Gramstadt, 2012). Meece et al. (2017) provide an update on two of the first arts repositories in higher education and enhancements made since their inception.

In the US, a number of studies examine fine art and visual art in IRs. McKeehan (2015) surveys how art departments at larger colleges and universities document artwork by undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty. In a separate survey, the author asks IR staff about cooperation with art departments for deposits, policies for deposits, use of metadata, and types of open access available to those who add materials. In an interview survey of fine arts faculty, Lambaria (2020) studies what helped and/or hindered faculty in depositing their work in an IR. The article highlights faculty comments regarding benefits, concerns, and expectations related to adding their work to IRs. Akins (2018) discusses considerations for adding Master of Fine Arts visual arts theses to an IR such as copyright, resolution, metadata, file size, the amount of an artist's work to add, and the type of open access. Garcia's (2019) article discusses the development of a pilot project to have BFA photography students deposit a press kit, which included a Portable Document Format file of some of their senior project work, for deposit in the university's IR.

Metadata such as artwork titles, medium, size, creation date, and artists' statements each add to the viewers' understanding of an artwork. Millis (2001), in his study of undergraduate students viewing illustrations and photographs, found that elaborative titles of artwork produce a greater aesthetic experience for the viewer than descriptive titles. Leder et al. (2006) discuss how descriptive information accompanying a painting helps to classify it whereas more explanatory information increases understanding of the artwork, particularly for abstract art. Specht (2010) conducted a study to determine whether an artist's statement affects how an untrained art viewer assesses a piece of art and found that emotionally arousing artists' statements can change a viewer's perception of the artwork.

Groups and conversations can affect the time that visitors spend viewing artwork. In their study of the time visitors spend viewing artwork at The Art Institute of Chicago, Smith et al. (2017) found a mean viewing time of approximately 28 seconds. The authors noted that "there were no significant effects for gender or age, and there was a small group size effect [an increase in viewing time] for visitors in groups of 3 or more" (p. 77). In their research, Tröndle et al. (2012) found that visitors to an art museum stayed longer if they were in conversation with others.

Digitizing and displaying artwork online and in IRs can be challenging. Botticelli (2015) discusses the challenge of working with minimal documentation when digitizing a collection of Andy Warhol Polaroids and preserving Warhol's aesthetic choices, which included film processing defects. White and Hemmings (2010) note that IRs are traditionally not set up for displaying artwork. Lundén and Sundén (2015) describe the complexity of displaying digital artwork in IRs, which were developed primarily for text-based documents.

Although there may be challenges to displaying artwork online, there are also advantages. Zappaterra (2008) quotes an interview with Professor Jack Lohman, in which Lohman discusses the benefits of viewer interactions with online exhibitions: "Visitors can interact much more with online exhibitions and often feel freer to do so. Users can leave messages...The pay-off is the opportunity to play with an object, rotate it, focus on detail, or zoom in on something" (p. 17). Lohman's comments speak to the advantages of using software that allow the viewer to manipulate the image in various ways. Sood (2016), the Director of the Google Cultural Institute, discusses how "technology can help open up art and culture to everyone, and we think that's a powerful thing" (para. 5).

## METHODS

The authors conducted two surveys, each of which was approved by Boise State University's Institutional Review Board. The first survey protocol was designed to investigate how participants experienced an art exhibition in person and the second to study how they experienced a representation of the art exhibition online.

The first survey was administered at the opening reception for the Fall 2016 BFA Exhibition on November 11, 2016, which was held in two buildings. As people walked between the two buildings, the authors asked attendees to complete a paper survey with nine questions about their experience viewing the exhibition ([Appendix A](#)).

A separate piece of paper was stapled to the bottom of each survey asking participants to write down their email address if they would be interested in a follow-up survey about the online BFA Exhibition later in the semester. To protect the privacy of participants, the paper attachments with the email addresses were removed from the surveys before the responses were recorded. The responses from the paper survey were recorded on a spreadsheet, and the paper surveys were shredded.

Approximately one month after the close of the in-person BFA Exhibition, coinciding with the launch of the online exhibition, the second survey instrument was distributed to the participants who had provided their email addresses with the paper survey. Qualtrics (Provo, UT) survey software was used for the questionnaire and distribution. The instructions asked participants

to view the online Fall 2016 BFA Exhibition prior to answering questions. The online survey consisted of 12 questions, 11 of which mirrored the survey questions for the in-person BFA Exhibition. An additional question asked respondents to compare their experiences with the in-person and online exhibitions. Only two participants completed the electronic survey.

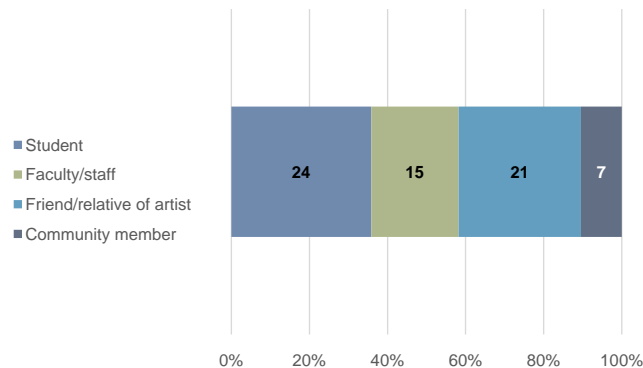
The researchers then decided to revise their Institutional Review Board protocol to distribute the survey to all art department faculty and students (approximately 400 people). This survey distribution decision allowed the researchers to reach a large audience of stakeholders who were likely to respond to the questionnaire. Additionally, this population overlapped with attendees at the in-person exhibition. The questionnaire ([Appendix B](#)) was redesigned to allow for the consideration that some respondents may not have attended the in-person Fall 2016 BFA Exhibition. The revised survey was distributed in April 2017 via an announcement in the Blackboard (Reston, VA) course management system, which the art department used as a means of communicating with students and faculty. The announcement included links to both the IR exhibition and the survey questionnaire in Qualtrics.

## RESULTS

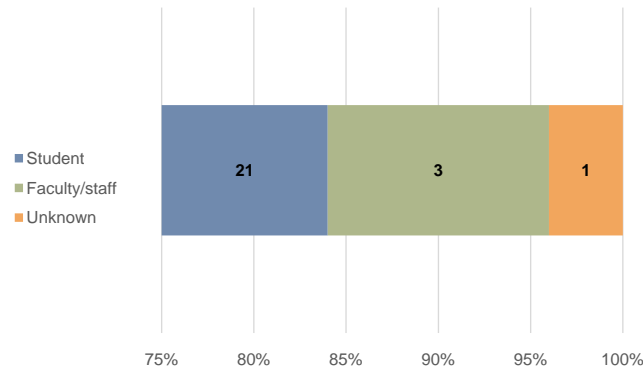
Responses to free-answer survey questions were manually coded to categorize the answers into groupings. Where appropriate, selected participant comments are included to illustrate a finding.

### Response rates and participant demographics

At the in-person BFA Exhibition, a total of 67 individuals completed the paper survey out of an estimated 100 attendees. The second electronic survey had a 6% response rate, with 25 individuals participating. Demographic breakdowns for each participant group are shown in Figures 1 and 2. Note that more options were provided to in-person survey respondents for answering this query. The majority of participants in both studies were students.



**Figure 1.** Demographic Characteristics of In-Person Survey Respondents.



**Figure 2.** Demographic Characteristics of Online Survey Respondents.

**Amount of artwork viewed**

Both in-person and online survey questionnaires asked participants how much of the exhibition they viewed, with possible answers including “All artwork,” “Most of the artwork,” “Only a few artists’ artworks,” and “One artists’ artwork.” Responses for both groups indicated that most participants viewed all the exhibition artwork, although the percentage for in-person participants was 20% higher (Table 1).

**Artists’ statements**

At the opening reception for the in-person Fall 2016 BFA Exhibition, the artists’ statements were located in an untitled black binder on a table inside each of the two exhibition spaces. In the online BFA Exhibition, the artists’ statements were located after the “Dimensions” field in each record (Figure 3).

The survey for the in-person exhibition asked attendees whether they had viewed the binder with the artists’ statements. If yes, attendees were asked to explain the benefits of viewing the

Answer	In Person		Online	
	Count	%	Count	%
<b>All</b>	59	88%	17	68%
<b>Most</b>	8	12%	6	24%
<b>Only a few</b>	0	0%	2	8%
<b>One artist’s work</b>	0	0%	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	67	100%	25	100%

**Table 1.** Amount of Artwork Viewed.

**Creation Date**

2016



**Medium**

video projection and oil on paper

**Description**

**Dimensions:** 228.6 cm x 279.4 cm

**Artist Statement**

Recently I have begun examining in the way in which meaning is encoded and encapsulated in semiotic structures. As a painter, this study has primarily been directed toward symbolic structures. While exploring the processes of symbolic encoding, it is inevitable that meaning itself and its particular qualities are examined as well.

**Figure 3.** Placement of Artist Statements in IR Metadata Records for Artwork.

binder, and if no, they were asked to explain why they had not viewed the binder. In the survey for the online exhibition, participants were also asked whether they had read the artists' statements. Similar to the in-person survey, if yes, they were asked to provide the benefits of reading the artists' statements, and if no, they were asked to provide an explanation. Twenty percent more online survey respondents indicated that they had read the artists' statements compared with in-person survey respondents (Table 2).

### **Benefits of reading the artists' statements**

Both the online and in-person surveys asked participants who viewed the artists' statements what the benefits were of doing so. Comments for both surveys were categorized into three



Answer	In Person		Online	
	Count	%	Count	%
<b>Yes</b>	24	36%	14	56%
<b>No</b>	43	64%	11	44%
<b>Total</b>	67	100%	25	100%

**Table 2.** Persons Who Read the Artists' Statements.

Code	In Person		Online	
	Count	%	Count	%
<b>Artist's point of view</b>	8	44%	9	82%
<b>Checking on students</b>	1	6%	0	0%
<b>Understand artwork</b>	9	50%	2	18%
<b>Total</b>	18	100%	11	100%

**Table 3.** Benefits of Viewing Artists' Statements.

thematic groups and assigned one of the three codes as shown in Table 3. Comments coded as “Understand artwork” related to understanding the artwork concepts, the meaning behind the art, or the artist’s perspective. Most answers to this question for both surveys were coded as “Understand artwork” or “Artist’s point of view.” Results are summarized in Table 3.

**Reasons for not viewing the artists' statements**

Both the in-person and online surveys asked those participants who did not view the artists’ statements why they did not do so. Responses were coded into five categories for the

Code	In Person		Online	
	Count	%	Count	%
<b>Didn't want to read</b>	2	8%	2	22%
<b>In use</b>	2	8%	0	0%
<b>Read at in-person exhibition</b>	-	-	2	22%
<b>Unaware of or didn't see</b>	20	80%	5	56%
<b>Will read later</b>	1	4%	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	25	100%	9	100%

**Table 4.** Reasons Given for Not Viewing Artists' Statements.

in-person survey, with one additional category for the online survey, as summarized in Table 4. Each comment was assigned to one coding category. The most common reason given by both groups for not viewing the statements related to their lack of awareness.

**Total time spent viewing the exhibition and each artwork**

Visitors at the in-person exhibition were asked about their total time spent at the opening reception. The online exhibition survey asked about total time spent viewing the online exhibition. Answers for each group are shown in Table 5.

The two surveys also asked respondents about the average amount of time they spent viewing each artwork (Table 6). The in-person survey results demonstrate longer viewing times, with 22% of participants answering that they spent greater than six minutes per artwork, compared with 8% of the online survey respondents. It is also notable that online survey participants answered that they spent less than one minute per artwork, 46% more than did in-person survey participants.

Answer	In Person		Online	
	Count	%	Count	%
<b>&gt;60 minutes</b>	17	25%	3	12%
<b>31-60 minutes</b>	32	48%	1	4%
<b>15-30 minutes</b>	15	22%	5	20%
<b>&lt;15 minutes</b>	3	4%	16	64%
<b>Total</b>	67	100%	25	100%

**Table 5.** Total Time Spent Viewing the Exhibition.

Answer	In Person		Online	
	Count	%	Count	%
<b>&gt;15 minutes</b>	2	3%	0	0%
<b>6-15 minutes</b>	13	19%	2	8%
<b>1-5 minutes</b>	45	67%	9	36%
<b>&lt;1 minute</b>	7	10%	14	56%
<b>Total</b>	67	100%	25	100%

**Table 6.** Total Time Spent Viewing Each Artwork.

### What participants liked most about the exhibition

Ninety-four percent of in-person survey respondents and 60% of online survey participants responded to the question about what they liked most about the exhibition. Comments from both surveys were coded into categories with seven themes for the in-person survey and six themes for the online survey, as summarized in Table 7. Because some of the answers to this question were long and addressed more than one topic, the responses could be assigned to more than one code. A summary of coding for each survey group is shown in Table 7.

#### Notes on codes

Comments related to the physicality of attending the opening reception—including aspects of the artwork, food, and social elements such as discussions with classmates—were coded as “Physicality.”

The largest category (47%) of what participants liked most for both surveys was coded as “Positive comments about the artwork.” Participants noted that they liked “the fact that you could zoom and look at each piece individually as well as get a caption from the artist” and that “if you missed seeing the show in person you could view it online.”

#### Improving the experience

Participants in both surveys were asked what would improve their experience. The responses to these questions were coded into one coding category per comment, with eight categories for

Code	In Person		Online	
	Count	%	Count	%
<b>Features of the online system</b>	-	-	7	47%
<b>Physicality</b>	18	22%	-	-
<b>Positive comments about the artwork</b>	18	22%	5	33%
<b>Program or students</b>	17	21%	0	0%
<b>Student joy</b>	4	5%	0	0%
<b>Talking to artists</b>	13	16%	-	-
<b>Variety of artwork</b>	12	15%	2	13%
<b>Unclear response</b>	0	0%	1	7%
<b>Total</b>	82	100%	15	100%

**Table 7.** What Participants Liked Most.

Code	In Person		Online	
	Count	%	Count	%
<b>Artist talks, engagement, or artists' statements</b>	11	23%	0	0%
<b>Artwork</b>	2	4%	0	0%
<b>Enlarge images</b>	-	-	3	23%
<b>Food or alcohol</b>	6	13%	-	-
<b>Gallery space improvements</b>	10	21%	-	-
<b>Improve interface</b>	-	-	8	62%
<b>Other</b>	0	0%	2	15%
<b>Nothing</b>	13	28%	0	0%
<b>Unclear response</b>	5	11%	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	47	100%	13	100%

**Table 8.** Suggestions for Improving the Experience.

the in-person survey responses and 10 categories for the online responses (Table 8). Forty-seven (67%) in-person survey participants responded to this question compared with 13 (52%) online survey participants.

Of note is that 23% of in-person survey responses indicated that artist talks and/or more engagement with the artists would be beneficial additions to the in-person exhibition, as would greater accessibility to the artists' statements. None of the online survey responses were coded for this category.

Responses for the in-person survey focused on the lack of availability and visibility of the artist statement binders. None of the online survey comments were in this category. Thirteen percent of in-person survey comments noted a desire for food or alcohol, and 21% commented on the gallery space itself, including the size of the space (e.g., "Use both galleries?" and "less crowded venue"), traffic flow, temperature, and lighting.

Suggestions made in the online survey clustered around improvements to the online experience. Twenty-three percent noted that they would like larger or higher-quality images, with one respondent saying that "it's very difficult to appreciate the images when they take up so little of the screen and you can't zoom in for more quality." Sixty-two percent of the online survey comments suggested improving the software interface. Respondents wanted "more interactive software," "actual video clips of the video pieces," "streamlining the viewing process," and "making the website look more like [sic] a gallery, museum, artist webpage would help tremendously!" Fifteen percent of comments were classified as "other." This category

includes one comment about wanting more time to spend viewing the exhibition and another wishing that all gallery works were included in the online exhibition.

### **Exhibition preference**

The online survey asked participants an additional question about which Fall 2016 BFA Exhibition they preferred. Forty-seven percent of the online survey participants indicated that they attended the in-person BFA Exhibition, and each of these nine respondents indicated that they preferred the in-person exhibition to the online exhibition.

### **Experience viewing the online exhibition compared with the in-person exhibition**

Respondents of the online survey were then asked to explain and comment on their experience viewing the two exhibitions. Eight people (33%) responded. One respondent commented that art objects online lack the power to create viewer engagement, especially with the type of immersive pieces included in this exhibition. This sentiment was echoed by another commenter, who used the term “sterile” to describe the images. One viewer made note of some reasons for this, including that it is difficult to get a sense of elements such as “texture, scale, translucency, and overall presence.” Some participants commented on technical issues, including that images loaded slowly and were quite small. In addition, one individual complained that the online exhibition did not include all of each artist’s works. However, some viewers did appreciate elements of the online exhibition, with one noting that it is useful as an archive and for later reference and another noting that they appreciated being able to view artists’ statements online.

### **Additional comments**

The online survey also asked participants whether they had any additional comments. Eleven out of 24 participants (46%) responded. One respondent commented, “It was nice to view the artwork since I couldn’t make it to the show. It could serve to wet people’s appetites to go see it in person. The [IR] interface could be simplified greatly to allow focus on the artwork.” Another respondent said, “Short video clips would be an awesome addition to this already super cool online viewing system.”

## **CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS**

Because of the lack of response to the first electronic survey, the researchers chose to send the second electronic survey to art department faculty, staff, and students. This created overlapping but different populations for the in-person and electronic participant surveys.

In addition, although response rates were excellent for the in-person survey and acceptable for the second electronic one, the total number of respondents in each group was low. For that reason, the quantitative results are most useful for theory generation and not confirmation.

The survey question regarding total time spent viewing each artwork was worded differently in the two surveys: those who attended the opening exhibition in person were asked “How much time did you spend in total at the Fall 2016 BFA Exhibition Opening Reception?” whereas online viewers were asked “How much time did you spend in total viewing the online exhibition?” Because the opening reception included activities other than artwork viewing, responses to this line of inquiry cannot be compared between the two groups of participants.

There were also a few areas in which the research process could be improved. Distributing the online survey through survey software rather than in the Blackboard course management system may have yielded more results. In addition, clearer directions provided to the online survey respondents would have ensured that they knew how to find the descriptive information and artist’s statement for each artwork. As noted earlier, more attention to consistency in the wording of questions between the two surveys would provide more comparable results. Finally, although all participants in the online survey indicated that they had viewed at least some of the artworks in the IR, this cannot be confirmed with certainty because of the mode of distribution.

## DISCUSSION

This study allowed the authors to think about the experience of viewing artwork in person—and in an IR—and how the IR experience adds to the in-person experience.

An in-person exhibition, particularly an opening reception, allows for visitors to engage with the artists and with each other while viewing the artwork, encouraging visitors to stay longer. Conversely, viewing art online is often a solitary experience.

A desire for engagement might explain why 20% more online survey participants viewed the artists’ statements than did in-person survey participants. Another reason might be that the statements were more visible and available, with the exception that the “View Slideshow” option on the IR’s BFA Exhibition main page did not show links to the artists’ statements unless viewers clicked on an individual artwork.

Attendees at the in-person exhibition spent more time viewing the full exhibition and more time viewing each artwork. This may be because they were at the opening reception, a social event that encourages conversation and mingling. As Tröndle et al. (2012) found in their

study, conversation encourages art museum visitors to stay longer. Viewers of the online exhibition typically used their mobile device or computer on their own and not in a social setting. Survey comments showed that online participants spent less time viewing the exhibition and individual artwork than did in-person participants, indicating that a social environment may affect this factor. One way to expand the social element of the online exhibition would be to enable comments in the IR. The trade-off would be IR staff spending time to monitor comments.

An IR can enhance the experience of viewing art for those who have seen an exhibition in person and want to reexperience the exhibition by viewing it online. Online representations of art exhibitions provide several benefits—they allow for repeated viewing of an artwork at one's leisure and, if the software allows, the ability to zoom in on an artwork to view details. The ScholarWorks platform, run on Digital Commons by bepress, does not allow major modifications to the size of the image display box; however, viewers are able to zoom in on an image, and they can also download the artwork images if this feature is turned on in the IR. Other forms of media, such as audio and video files, can be displayed on the ScholarWorks platform, so students could potentially include audio or video files that were part of the artwork.

The online experience differs from the in-person experience in that the viewer does not always have a sense of the physical gallery space and is often viewing the exhibition in two dimensions rather than three dimensions. Photographs of artwork included in IRs are often of two types: images of individual works or gallery shots. Students could be encouraged to provide a variety of photographs of their work, such as whole artwork, close-ups, and gallery shots, to enhance the online viewing experience. Currently, the students are limited to submitting only five images in total. This number may need to be increased to allow for gallery shots to be included.

Additionally, one theme in the online survey responses relates to viewers wanting larger images of the artwork in the online BFA Exhibition. It is possible that some viewers did not know that thumbnail images could be selected to view a larger image. This indicates some usability issues with the IR interface, which was primarily created for text documents and does not allow for many modifications to the visual content module.

One advantage of the online exhibition is that the viewer can revisit the artwork in the IR as many times as they would like, whereas artwork in a gallery is usually available for a limited period. The ability to revisit an artwork is a positive aspect of the online representation of the art exhibition, and if a visitor has seen the artwork in person, the images in the IR may bring back memories of that experience.

The physical presence and size of the artwork can be lost in the online environment in the absence of gallery shots, even though the dimensions are often included. What is gained is the ability to zoom in on the image of the artwork in the IR, if the software allows, giving the viewer a new perspective. Interestingly, comments for the online survey were longer, which supports the finding by Foreman-Wernet et al. (2014) of greater cognitive involvement by those who view artwork online.

Preserving BFA art exhibitions is important for several reasons. The artwork is preserved in a permanent archive in the IR that BFA students can reference in their Vitas. Another benefit is that students can view previous exhibitions, allowing them to see former students' artwork as well as how the artwork was photographed. The IR is also important as an archive of BFA artwork over time, serving an important preservation function. In addition, online exhibitions lack the geographic and temporal barriers of in-person exhibitions, providing greater exposure for student artists.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Further research into the specific elements that create a sense of engagement with artworks in an online environment would be useful, especially for those setting up online exhibitions using IR software with limited functionality for visual displays. These engagement elements could then be compared across IR platforms and used to guide those setting up art exhibitions. Additionally, this type of matrix would be helpful in recommending improvements to IR vendors.

Another area of interest would be an exploration of how the library can support art students in their media submissions to an IR exhibition. This could include investigating how collaborations between librarians and art department faculty might improve student submissions to the IR. For example, a librarian could give a presentation with suggestions for improving their submissions.

## **CONCLUSION**

Despite challenges, the two surveys provide a rich set of qualitative data surrounding questions about the differences between the experience of viewing artwork in person and that of viewing it in an IR, how the IR experience might add to the in-person experience, and how art exhibitions in IRs might be improved to create more viewer engagement.

Survey results for the online Fall 2016 BFA Exhibition suggest that additional context about the artists and their work could improve viewer engagement. Improving the quality of images would remove barriers to engagement with the works. In addition, adding audio or video components of installation works to the IR records would provide a more complete experience to



viewers. On the positive side, responses indicate that online viewing of the BFA exhibition enhances the viewer's experience by allowing them to read the artists' statements more easily, zoom in on an artwork, and download an artwork. Viewers can return to the BFA exhibition in the IR at any time, and they can view exhibitions over a span of years. In addition, the online BFA exhibition allows students to view student artwork completed in the past, and it provides them with a persistent uniform resource locator and archived record of their work.

Although the online representation of the art exhibition in the IR is not a complete replacement for the in-person exhibition, it is a representation that the authors believe can positively influence a viewer's experience of the BFA exhibition, whether they have viewed the in-person exhibition or not. Respondents' comments in both surveys provided suggestions for improving the two exhibitions, as well as insights into how IR exhibitions enhance the in-person exhibition experience.

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**APPENDIX A.**

**Fall 2016 BFA Exhibition Survey (In Person)**

1. Please check the box that best describes you: (select only one)

- Student  Boise State University faculty/staff  Community member  
 Friend/relative of artist in the exhibition

2. How much of the exhibition in the Hemingway Center did you view? (select only one)

- All artwork  Most of the artwork  Only a few artists' artworks  
 One artist's artwork

3. What are your reasons for attending the Fall 2016 BFA Exhibition?

4. Did you view the binder with the artists' statements? (select Yes or No)

- Yes  No

5. If Yes, what were the benefits of viewing the binder? (e.g. added to understanding of artwork)

6. If No, why didn't you view the binder? (e.g. unaware of binder or binder was in use)

7. How much time did you spend in total at the Fall 2016 BFA Exhibition Opening Reception?

- More than 1 hour  31 minutes to 1 hour  15-30 minutes  Less than 15 minutes

8. How much time did you spend on average viewing each artwork?

- More than 15 minutes  6-15 minutes  1-5 minutes  Less than 1 minute

9. What did you like most about attending the Fall 2016 BFA Exhibition in-person?

10. What would improve your experience at the Fall 2016 BFA Exhibition?

11. Are you interested in viewing an online version of this exhibition?

- Yes  No

12. If you would be willing to take a follow up survey about the online version of this exhibition, please enter your email address here:

## APPENDIX B.

### Fall 2016 BFA Exhibition on ScholarWorks Survey (Online)

1. Please check the box that best describes you: (select only one)

Student  Boise State University faculty/staff

2. How much of the online exhibition did you view? (select only one)

All artwork  Most of the artwork  Only a few artists' artworks  
 One artist's artwork

3. How much time did you spend in total viewing the online exhibition?

More than 1 hour  31 minutes to 1 hour  15-30 minutes  Less than 15 minutes

4. How much time did you spend on average viewing each work online?

More than 15 minutes  6-15 minutes  1-5 minutes  Less than 1 minute

5. Did you read some or all of the artists' statements online? (select Yes or No)

Yes  No

6. If Yes, what were the benefits of reading the artists' statements?

7. If No, why didn't you read the artists' statements?

8. What did you like most about the online Fall 2016 BFA Exhibition?

9. What would improve your experience viewing the online Fall 2016 BFA Exhibition?

10. Did you attend the Fall 2016 BFA Exhibition in person?

Yes  No

[Question 10 was asked only in version 2]

11. If yes, which Fall 2016 BFA Exhibition did you prefer? (select one)

[Version 1 phrasing: “Which Fall 2016 BFA Exhibition did you prefer? (select one)]

In-person  Online

If yes, please explain and comment on your experience viewing the online exhibition compared to the in-person exhibition?

12. Do you have any additional comments?