SPENCER MUSEUM of ART

Digital Resources and Social Media Evaluation
Request for Proposals

This RFP is open to freelance consultants and agencies to evaluate the effectiveness of the University of Kansas's (KU) Spencer Museum of Art's (SMA) website, social media presence, and digital applications, with a focus on user experience. The scope of work includes a report on the effectiveness of each component of our external facing digital resources. This position will be fully remote.

RESPONSES DUE: January 31, 2021

QUESTIONS AND PROPOSALS TO: Jennifer Talbott, Deputy Director for Operations and Innovation, jtalbott@ku.edu

BUDGET: Up to $15,000

DELIVERY DATE: August 15, 2021

ABOUT THE SPENCER MUSEUM OF ART
Located on the University of Kansas (KU) Lawrence campus, the Spencer Museum of Art's galleries offer a dynamic classroom for students at KU, K–12 students across Kansas, and lifelong learners in the Midwest region. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Spencer Museum engaged a digital consultant to work with the staff, KU partners, and national advisors in determining internal and external digital priorities with the end goal of creating the Spencer Museum's first comprehensive digital plan. This consultant also completed a review of the Museum's website and apps.

With support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Museum seeks to enlist a digital consultant to build on the initial review of our website and application and to specifically assess the effectiveness of the Museum's existing web platforms and social media presence through user testing. The consultant hired will also make recommendations for future areas of focus and adaptations to enhance the experience of existing and new audiences. The goal of the evaluation is to provide the Spencer Museum with a written set of recommendations based on external audience desires for improving discoverability, exploration, engagement, and accessibility with Spencer digital resources. It will also serve as one of the foundational documents in writing the Museum's digital plan and informing future resource development.

STATE OF DIGITAL PRESENCE
The Spencer Museum has a robust digital infrastructure with records for all of its collection objects online and significant additional content. Currently, the Museum operates digitally across various platforms, including a visitor-focused website (www.spencerart.ku.edu), which uses the Drupal content management system; a mobile app; custom-built web-based applications (www.spencerartapps.ku.edu), which include Collection Search, Curricular Resources Database, K–12 Lesson Plans, and Collection Mapping; and social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube). With increased user engagement of the Museum's online resources and social channels due to COVID-19, structural challenges have been accentuated. Weaknesses in how audiences navigate a wealth of material across multiple platforms, barriers to rapidly developing new web content, as well as engagement on social media platforms, has accelerated the Museum's desire to improve its digital presence and specifically our website architecture.

DIGTIAL HISTORY

The Spencer's main website that was launched in 2016 (www.spencerart.ku.edu), corresponding to the reopening of the Museum after a major renovation. The architecture, navigation, content, and site development in Drupal was managed entirely in-house with the programming supported by the University IT department (KUIT). Also around 2016 the Museum launched its Spencer Museum of Art Mobile App, also supported by KUIT. The mobile app was our first experiment in connecting a digital application to our collection management database through an API. Subsequent digital projects have emphasized the necessity of joining all of our applications, including the main visitor website, to this content management system (MuseumPlus) to streamline workflows and sustain customized applications that meet audience needs.

The Spencer's primary repository of digital information is managed with a MuseumPlus collection database that was adopted in 2002. The database now contains more than 200,000 records that document 45,000+ collection objects created by 9,000+ artists, manufacturers, and cultural groups. Database content includes records for conservation activities; decades of exhibitions and public programs; institutional archives that span the last 100 years; images, videos, publications, audio files, and other multimedia; and university instructors' class assignments and K–12 teachers' lesson plans that are inspired by collection objects. From 2016 until present, a substantial amount of this data has been shared through Spencer Art Apps, which includes three searchable databases: Collection Search (https://spencerartapps.ku.edu/collection-search#/), Curricular Resource Database (https://spencerartapps.ku.edu/curricular-resources), and K–12 Lesson Plans (https://spencerartapps.ku.edu/k12-lesson-plans#/), as well as the Spencer Mobile App to enrich the in-gallery visitor experience, and Collection Mapping (https://spencerartmapping.ku.edu/), which visualizes and geo-maps information about the Museum's collection. The apps were developed to support research and curiosity for a diverse global audience, to enhance teaching and research at KU and other universities and colleges, to drive arts integration in K–12 classrooms, to foster loan requests from peer institutions, and ultimately, to make the Spencer Museum of Art's public art collection accessible beyond the walls of its galleries. Each subsequent application development has informed the next as we seek to tighten and simplify back-end structures to remain nimble in responding to audience-driven development.

AUDIENCE AND VISITORS

Faculty and students at KU are foremost among the many communities of learners who depend on the Museum's resources for meaningful experiences with art and ideas. The Museum serves as an informal classroom and integrates its diverse collection into the curriculum through customized viewing experiences in its study centers, installations co-curated with faculty, co-curricular programming, and more. In 2019, the Museum directly engaged 1 out of every 3 KU students, including 98% of incoming freshmen. School teachers from 29 districts across Kansas and Missouri integrated the Museum's collection into their teaching last year, and more than 2,600 K–12 students visited the galleries as part of school tours. In addition to university and K–12 students, the Museum is a source of education, socialization, and stimulation for lifelong learners. Adults who value free programs and opportunities for discussion with staff and other visitors represent a large segment of the Museum's audience.

PROJECT EVALUATION OBJECTIVES
- Discoverability of content, resources, and applications digitally available to audiences:
  - If you know something exists, can you find it easily without a direct URL?
  - If you don't know something exists, can you easily stumble upon it or be led there by Google?
- Functionality of website and applications:
  - How easy are they to use?

- o Are they accessible to an audience with a wide variety of abilities?
- Relevance of social media platforms:
  - o How does our engagement compare to peer art museums?
  - o What can we do to enhance our exposure?
  - o How can we use social media to gain new audiences?
  - o How can we connect social media audiences with other digital resources?
- Comparison to art museum field:
  - o How do we measure up to other university and college art museums?
  - o How do we compare to global leaders?
  - o What are some art museums we should aspire to emulate?
- Recommendations for changes to website hierarchy:
  - o Are there emerging structures that better serve audiences than traditional models?
  - o What are the advantages and disadvantages of integrating both websites (spencerart.ku.edu and spencerartapps.ku.edu)?

DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES AND EXPECTED OUTPUTS

- Overview of the effectiveness, usability, and sustainability of public facing platforms and applications
  - o SMA apps: www.spencerartapps.ku.edu, with specific attention given to targeted audience for each application
  - o Main website: www.spencerart.ku.edu
  - o Mobile app
  - o Social media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube
- Evaluation of web-based programs/websites including but not limited to:
  - o PSST: https://www.psstmission.com/
  - o Collection Cards: https://collectioncards.ku.edu/
  - o Spencer Museum Arts Collaborative: https://www.smacspencer.com/
  - o Bulldog Art Tours: https://spencerart.ku.edu/bulldog/2020
  - o Collection Tours: https://spencerartapps.ku.edu/collection-tours
  - o Virtual Exhibitions: https://www.spencerart.ku.edu/virtual-exhibition
  - o Docent Website: https://www.spencermuseumdocents.com/
- Conduct audience evaluations, both already engaged and those missing, to receive direct feedback on application relevance and site functionality with a focus on audience-directed future development of digital platforms and how perceptions have changed as a result of the global pandemic

  Currently Targeted Audiences
  - o Teachers for K–12 Lesson Plan Database
  - o KU Faculty for Curricular Resource Database
  - o General for website/mobile app/collection search/social media
  - o Specific audience personas of interest to the museum:
    - University of Kansas Students
    - University Faculty (KU and regionally)
    - K–12 teachers and students
    - Peer institutions (specifically other university art museums)
    - Artists
    - Kansas residents
    - Scholars and researchers
    - Children (PSST and Collection Cards)
    - Families/Lawrence community members – how did they get to the museum?

- Recommendation of concrete ways to integrate ongoing evaluation of digital platforms into staff workflows to ensure continued development of existing applications
- Summary of relevance of digital platforms in comparison to national and international trends

APPENDICES
- Design for Context Website and Application Review
- Design for Context Mellon Digital Initiative Consultant Summary— Visits 1–3
- Spencer Art Apps Overview
- Strategic Plan
- Comprehensive Interpretive Plan

RESPONDENTS' REQUIREMENTS

Applicants are encouraged to review the Museum's main website (spencerart.ku.edu), strategic plan (https://indd.adobe.com/view/70683120-97ce-45bc-a9f9-58c2e303f201), and interpretive plan (https://indd.adobe.com/view/0ba37acf-9467-46d1-bf72-a3b7af3374ea) in advance of submitting a proposal.

- **Background Information.** A cover letter or executive summary with the name, contact information, brief history, and description of the agency or individual applying. Include resumes or bios of those who will be providing services. The University of Kansas, Spencer Museum of Art is an equal opportunity employer and encourages responses from minority- and women-owned business enterprises, veteran-owned business enterprises, lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender-owned enterprises, and disability-owned business enterprises. If you/your agency's ownership represents one or more of the above, please note it in your proposal.

- **Your Experience in Providing the Services and Examples.** Describe your experience or the experience of your agency and its consultants in providing similar services to those requested here, including conducting user experience studies evaluating website design and assessing social media personas. Further, describe demonstrated outcomes as a result of the work performed in client organizations. Please share at least two relevant examples of your work.

- **Additional Experience.** Describe any experience you have had with any of the following types of organizations
    - Art museums, or museums in general
    - Universities or colleges
    - Not-for-profit institutions
- **Approach and Timeline.** Provide a description of the approach you/your agency uses when consulting with organizations on digital platforms, a projected timeline, and estimated number of billable hours. Tell us what you believe is most critical to your practice. Describe your approach to user testing remotely.
- **References.** Three verifiable client references with contact information.

- **Conflicts of Interest.** Any known relationships that would or could create a conflict of interest with the Spencer Museum of Art or the University of Kansas if you were awarded a contract.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

All proposals should be submitted by email to jtalbott@ku.edu, to the attention of Jennifer Talbott, Deputy Director for Operations and Innovation. Should you have any questions or require additional information, please send any inquiries to the same email or call (785) 864-0135.

PROJECT TIMELINE

RFP Sent: December 3, 2020
Responses Due: January 31, 2021
Consultant Selected: March 15, 2021
Project Start: April 1, 2021
Final Deliverables: August 15, 2021

Thank you for your interest in responding to this RFP with a proposal for the Spencer Museum of Art's digital platforms to support the arts and education of K–12, university, and lifelong learners. We look forward to reviewing your proposal.

SMA Apps and Website Review

Rachel Sengers & Duane Degler, 2.17.2020

PURPOSE

Design for Context was asked to carry out a high-level review of the Spencer Museum of Art's (SMA) mobile apps, website apps, and public website. This review is scoped to provide overall impressions and opportunities – while we make some suggestions about future design considerations, this review does not focus on specific design suggestions that would need to be part of a more complete user-centered design process that would be valuable in the future.

CONTENTS

Overall Impressions

ORIENTATION TO THE SPENCER MUSEUM OF ART

On entering the website or the mobile app, it seems hard to get a sense of the Spencer as a whole. The navigation menus have a lot of the sections we would expect to see on a museum site, yet the overall experience is disorienting. A home page is like a foyer or entrance hall to a building, providing visual and language cues to what is inside the various doors and down the various hallways. It doesn't have to be exhaustive – or cluttered – but it should be informative. There is currently a reliance on the main site navigation for some of that orientation. In general, the web site is fairly easy to navigate on a larger screen. We discuss some of the challenges with navigating the website on mobile in the detailed comments below.

A WEALTH OF AVAILABLE RESOURCES… AND FRAGMENTATION

There is a lot of content available on the site, which is to the team's credit. At the same time, it presents a challenge:

- For people who are not familiar with the Spencer and all its activities, it takes a lot of browsing and reading to gain a sense of the scope, and what may be of interest
- For people who are familiar with the Spencer and its activities, there are a number of steps to get to particular sections of the site that are of interest.
- For people who are very familiar with the Spencer (including the staff), our limited observation and our own traversal of the site reflect that it is very hard to remember how to get to very specific things, so trial-and-error takes valuable time.

Managing as much content as you have will benefit from a more thoughtful information architecture, clearer signposting indicating where you are and what paths are available to you, and richer relationships between content areas – including structured relationships that are not links embedded in narrative text.

This concern with knowing there is rich information available, and yet having to navigate the fragmentation, shows up in numerous ways.

- There are different results between the mobile app Search and the website Collection Search (because the data that is available is different). So at times we needed to launch the website within the mobile app, then run the collection search, but browser navigation is not available so the site does not function effectively (and is very frustrating to use).
- People typically use the most immediate search capability available to them. But a general site search – for example, searching for "Matisse" – produces no results. So users have to go to a separate search interface (the Collection website app)
- As mentioned in previous visits and conversations, the difficulty in locating IARI "hybrid outputs" and events is a problem for such a high-profile initiative. There are multiple paths to get to pieces of information, but the relationship interconnections do not exist – there is no sense of the "whole."
- There are a number of places where there is a transition from website to web app. It is not clear that this is going to happen, and the expectations are not necessarily properly set for the user. Then, there is no way to return to the SMA website where you left off, but have to either navigate via the Back button or go back to the SMA website home page and start over with your navigation.

A FOCUS ON INFORMATION TYPES RATHER THAN USER JOURNEY

As is common with many museum websites, the emphasis is on the "things" rather than the way a user might think about what they want to achieve on the website. "Things" include exhibitions, objects, education materials, explanations. But the things can be overwhelming and at the same time feel hidden. The decision to present a small selection of items at the bottom of key pages, but without labels or a sense of their purpose on a particular page, adds to that sense of "things without flow."

Observations on SMA Mobile App

The most surprising thing about using the mobile app was that the phone (iOS 13) crashed and rebooted at one point. It is not clear whether this may have been the fault of the app, some conflict with a text message received while using the app, or our not recognizing how much battery had been consumed while using the app. We note this as something to watch out for in future.

NAVIGATION PATTERNS

The general navigation pattern of moving from a list to a brief overview to a detailed experience is sensible and useful. There are a few areas where it seems disorienting (see the description of Maps, below), but in general the movement through the layers makes sense. Unfortunately, to go to another part of the app, or even the menu, requires backing out screen-by-screen to the main home page menu.

At the same time, in a section like Tours, our expectation was that there would be some kind of route, or logic, to the way that tours are presented. Alphabetical listing of objects (for example in Altered Perspectives) and no indication of whether each object is on display – and if so, where – did not align with our expectation of a "Tour." We thought at one point, "Is this a Treasure Hunt? A gamified way of exploring the collection while in the museum?"

In the audio tour *Spencer Kids: Animal Tails* we discovered the ability to link out to Wikipedia, in our case the *chi wara headdress* link out to an image page of an antelope. Displaying the Wikipedia site in an embedded browser within the app is an interesting idea, but landing pages perhaps need to be more carefully considered? The typical Wikipedia image display page has a lot of information that is not useful to a casual user, and potentially opens up accidental (or purposeful?) secondary browsing by tapping links on the general Wikipedia page when scrolling to see if there is something else to view. This could particularly be an issue for children, given that this is an app targeted to those users.

One other small point related to the description in the *chi wara headdress* – there is an instruction to "Tap the Related icon to see an image…" but there is no icon. Tapping the cropped image was required. Below is the view of that page from an iPad app.
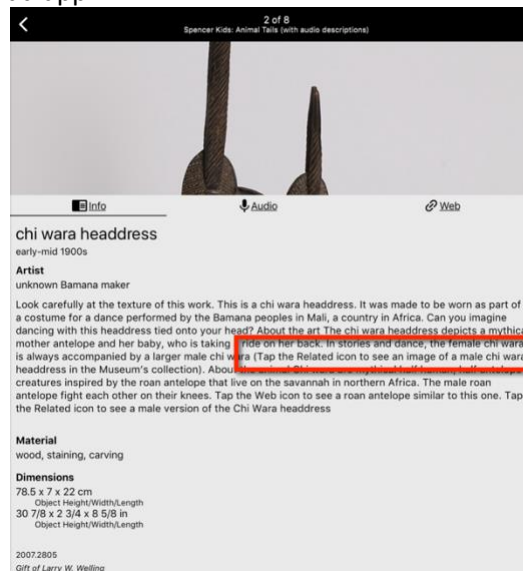

It would be very useful to do some user studies with the app to understand user expectations and the depth to which they expect to use the app – both in the gallery and potentially outside it.

VIEWING OBJECTS IN LISTS

The thin "letterbox" menu lists are not helpful to users. Our experience in the galleries in November 2019 as well as further exploration for this review confirmed that it is very difficult in many cases to identify the object from the thin thumbnail and title. The thumbnails do not necessarily show a distinctive or obvious part of each object, so they cannot always easily be used to recognize an object in person.

It is not clear whether the thumbnails are manually cropped to provide a view of the most salient feature of the image, or whether they are automatically trimmed (e.g. the "center" horizontal slice is displayed). Examples (near the top of the list) include *A Shipwreck* (Loutherbourgh) or *Apache Indian Camp in Taos Valley* (Couse). Unless the object itself is highly stylized and distinct (by color, pattern or shape) it can be difficult to mentally connect what you see in a list with what you are trying to find/view in the gallery.

We also noticed an odd mapping between a thumbnail and the object's image. This may be a bug?
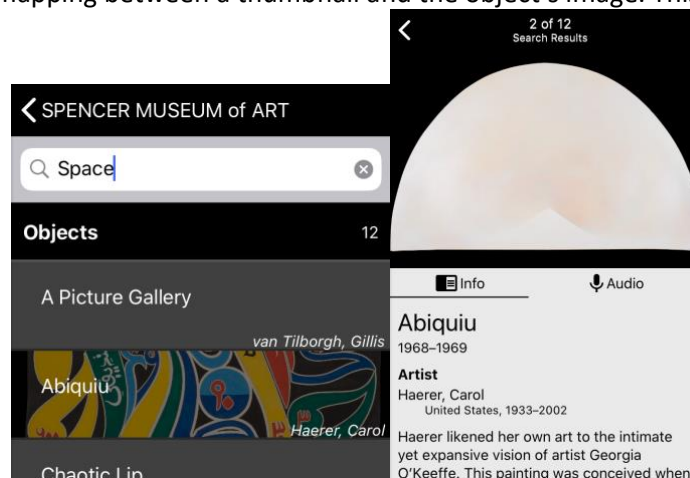
MAPS AND ORIENTATION

Upon entering the Maps section of the app, it is not immediately clear that the two images for the Empire of Things Deck and the Cabinet of Curiosities are "maps" in the same way that the 3rd and 4th Floors are maps. First impression was that each image associated with a floor, rather than providing a different experience.

The floor plan maps themselves are sufficiently high resolution so a user can pinch-and-zoom to read a gallery name. But when would a user need to do that? Are the gallery names most important for wayfinding in the physical space? If so, should there be some additional functionality associated with the maps, to allow a user to select a gallery by name and then orient themselves accordingly? Or have access to a list of what is on view in one of the gallery spaces indicated on the map? User studies are needed to understand the behavior and the value.

The two image maps are very difficult to navigate on mobile, and could be confusing.
- The Cabinet works as an image map, but the image is so tiny that it is hard to recognize that the labels are targets, and where a user has tapped then leads to a subset of objects for that one section – the title for the list is up in the navigation bar, and is just a letter-number combination, so it is easy to read past it and not recognize that it is indicating which section had been selected. If the user selects a cabinet segment with a lot of objects (like E-3), it is hard to realize that the list is only a partial set of objects. The user has to then return to the map and tap somewhere else. The approach only began to make sense when using pinch-and-zoom to read the tiny labels, and only then really meant to be used in the gallery itself.

- Once we adjusted to the way the Cabinet map works, we tried the Deck map, assuming it would work the same way. But it doesn't. There do not appear to be hotspots. It is possible that it will be desired by users to come to a section of a gallery, want to see all the objects in that section, and so user their mobile to find that space and look at the associated objects. But at that point, as noted above, shouldn't that capability be part of general map functionality, rather than just one display?

BOUNDARIES BETWEEN APP AND WEBSITE

The menu items are useful. We have a question about their order – alphabetical? Or is it intentional to put Facebook and Twitter first, for easy access by users (would they go to Facebook or Twitter via the app, or launch them directly? Presumably they would launch directly? It also seemed strange not to have Instagram.

The menu links to launch the SMA website (as an embedded browser within the app) are visible on a phone (iOS 13) but not visible on an iPad (iOS 12). We are not sure why that difference exists.

PERFORMANCE

Every list page (exhibitions, tours, sets of artworks) requires the loading of its images, which in some cases take a long time to load. It's somewhat distracting to have the images start changing while you're in the middle of reading and scrolling through a list. It initially made us wonder if we've seen everything, or if the list itself is changing as we interact with it. This is particularly an issue on the search page, where many hundreds of thumbnails are loading in the background. There's a secondary question of how much bandwidth is being consumed, and whether that is a good use of bandwidth if, for some reason, the user has a poor connection. Is there some way to optimize these small images for faster delivery?

As mentioned in a recent conversation, the bug behind caching/replaying of audio that has been played back from a tour (so that one or more tour audio tracks start playing again the next time you reopen the app) is irritating and probably limits users' desire to open the app in the future. Although, as the same time, by choosing the right tours, it has a performative avant garde experience aspect.

DATA VISUALIZATION: ART AND ARTISTS THROUGH TIME AND SPACE

We had some difficulty getting the application to work, so don't feel there is much to comment on its functionality. The map itself only really worked in Chrome – any action on the map in another browser caused it to disappear. It would probably be best to review it with the Spencer team on a conference call.

We suggest that a few things are needed to make this more approachable to the general public and students.
- Orientation and instruction: The small question mark icon is not that obvious, and the link to more detailed background and instructions should be available somewhere in the header area, rather than just a link within the short help panel. The level of complexity will require quite a bit of experimentation by the user, and easier access to reference will help that experimentation.
- When we zoom in on the map, while the map zooms the corresponding targets do not get larger. They are very tiny to interact with, and the behavior was very inconsistent as to what was displayed (the right column kept changing what was shown, when selections were made or not). It seemed, after trying it for a while, that the response time was lagging behind the user action, increasing the unpredictability.
- When zoomed in on the map, and then changing a major starting point (search or "story setting"), the map doesn't zoom back out – the user has to do that manually. It seems like it should zoom out, because those are fundamental changes in intention that require a re-orientation to the map.

- Given more time and thought, we would probably consider changes to the overall layout of the page to support clarity, signposting of user decisions and active data elements, controlling the various elements on the page, and providing easy review of large and dense areas of data.

We realize that the data visualization app is not yet finished, so we assume that some of the necessary elements will be put in place before it is released.

Observations on SMA Web Apps

CURRICULAR AND K-12 RESOURCES

These resources are very rich and valuable. If people find them, and use them, they provide a lot of useful information. In future, it would be interesting to look at how to extend their usefulness out of the PDF format, where appropriate. We suggest also reviewing the Smithsonian Learning Lab research for ideas.

The PDF links perform an automatic download. The label for the PDF says "View Assignment PDF (in Curricular Resources), but in some browsers (we tested with Firefox as well as Safari, with mixed results) it downloads in the background without opening up for view.

The biggest challenge with these pages is the results list. When the user runs a search, all the form fields remain at the top of the page, so it is not clear that anything has happened. The user has to scroll down below all that to see results.

COLLECTION SEARCH

When entering the Collection search, we are presented with a "Welcome" message. The dark "Close" button draws the eye to remove the interrupt and get to the desired goal – performing a search. However, that caused us to ignore the button for "Don't remind me again" a few times before looking more closely at the options on that interrupt pop-up. Does this message need to be there? Is it best for it to require that it is manually dismissed for the future by carefully reading the non-highlighted button?
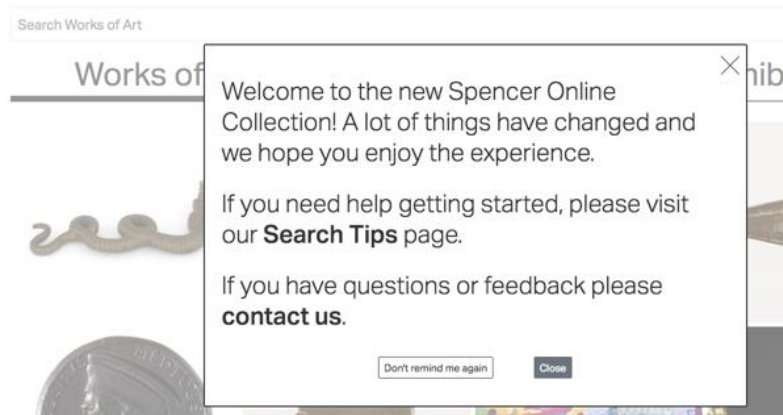

It is strange to see only eight randomized works of art with no titles or any identifying information. The scope and range of your collection is not clear (this is a common concern of ours on your site, as noted previously), and the search function seems limited. However, being able to run one search and look at it from three different dimensions can be useful – although the presentation as tabs does not make it obvious that is how the site functions.

The interaction with collection search is OK on the web, but seems like it could be simplified or clarified. And the controls do not behave very well on phone devices. Some examples:

- From within the mobile app, when using the embedded mobile web site, it is not possible to go "Back" within the browser container itself.
- There is so much information at the top of the page that users have to scroll a long way down to see results.

phone page break ->
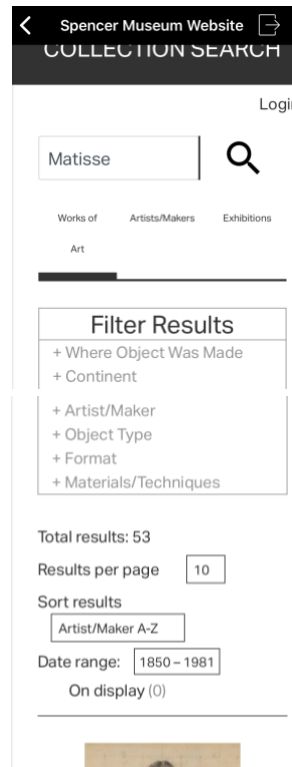
- The behavior of form controls takes some experimentation and could introduce user mistakes. This is described further in the next section.
- On a mobile phone, filters selected by the user are not always visible, or visible in a way that allows them to be de-selected or easily changed.
- Date filter behavior is unusual. We were able to figure out why it behaves the way it does – because it is drawing on beginning and end dates based on what is actually available in the results set – but this doesn't necessarily fit the way users think about dates. When we search for "Nagasaki" we see the date range "1587-2011" – yet when we move the end date slider to 1957, the display now shows "1587-1859."
    - On a separate note, upon resetting the date range to add back the item that was filtered out, the sort results did not work correctly. The sequence was: 1) Change the end date range; 2) Change sort order to "newest-oldest"; 3) Reset the date range. The newest item should have been at the top of the list, but was on page 2 of the results.

One final point: It is entertaining (at least for those of us who design search systems), and somewhat ironic that the first result in a search for "Matisse" is not works by Henri Matisse (results 2-6), but rather *nude study of Rectitude* (Kenyon Cox). It appears that the match is a statement in the label text that reads, "…and deplored modernists like Matisse…" The perils of alphabetical sorting (in this case, by artist). Relevance-based ranking would be useful, if possible.
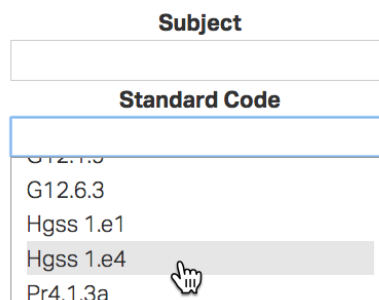
OBJECT PAGES

In general, the object pages are easy to read, and the additional detail in the tabs is useful. One area we have questions about is the link on every page to the image request. It directs the user to the image services page with the copyright warning. Are we correct in assuming that the Spencer has no works that it knows to be free of restrictions? Should there be some additional information to guide the user as to whom to contact regarding the ownership and rights discussion? Besides that, it would be useful to consider how you might streamline the design of the image request page in future, or align it with a separate capability to collect images before initiating the request.

On the Exhibitions tab, the number of very large, bold "No Image Available" icons feels distracting – we suggest that they can be smaller and tinted so as to be less dominant on the page, making it easier to read the accompanying text and to see quickly where images are available when scrolling.
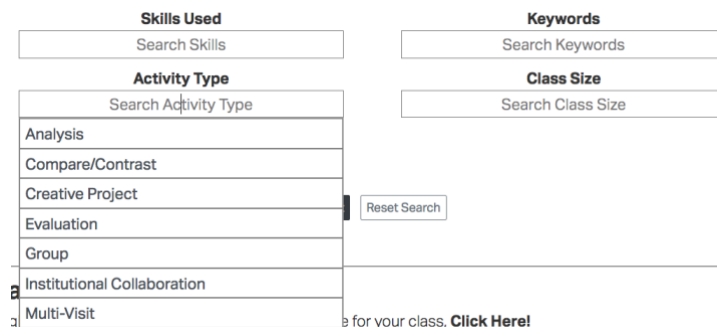
FORMS

As noted above for Collections Search, the form controls have some behaviors that may add challenges to the user experience.

There is little or no presentation difference between fields that are open text for typing and fields that have controlled values to be selected. In some cases, the fields have prompts (which may or may not be helpful) while in other cases they are blank, so the user is unaware that there may be an associated list. For example, a controlled list for K-12 Lesson Plans search, with no prompts or symbol indicating a drop-down:


A similar search for curricular resources, with a prompt to "search" although there is also a controlled vocabulary list for each field:

In the Collection Search, applying a filter includes the instruction to "Start typing here" and yet it immediately brings up a list when the field is selected. While the idea makes sense, to allow the user to type what they know and want, the expectation of what will happen is not clear.
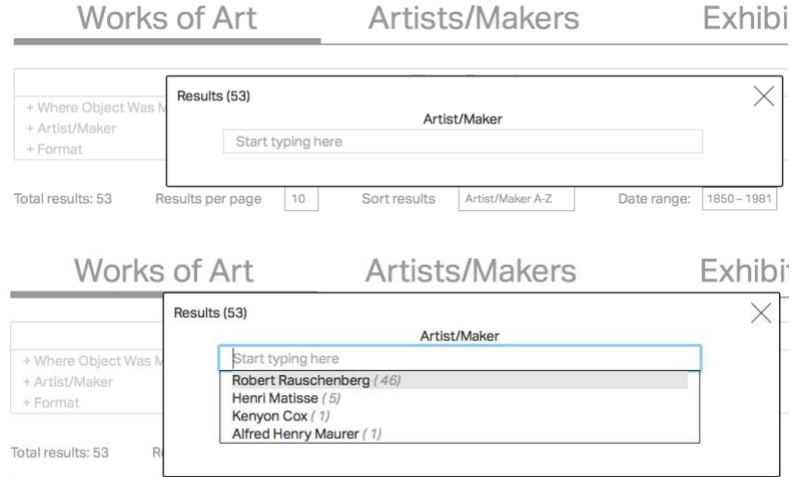
The last example of this is on the main website's form for requesting a course visit. The form has example text to guide what should be typed in the field ("ENGL 101: Composition"), an instruction ("- Select -"), and a pre-populated value ("KU") that you don't need to type in unless you are from another institution.

Observations on SMA Website

RESPONSIVE LAYOUT AND SCALE

The site design and proportions are generally set up for mobile use – very large fonts and lots of white space to create large targets for fingertip tapping.

The layout can be challenging for users, however, as it requires scrolling through a lot of space to get to the content of interest or to the action that is desired. For example, on the right is the calendar page. The secondary navigation for the Events section takes up a lot of room at the top, and can leave the user feeling that they must search to see events. Upon scrolling down, more capabilities become visible, including an interactive calendar as well as filters for different types of activities.
(note: we suggest that the filters include an "all" to reset the list)

It makes sense to consider how the responsive view of the page changes some of the layouts and the controls so that it is more useful for a mobile visitor.
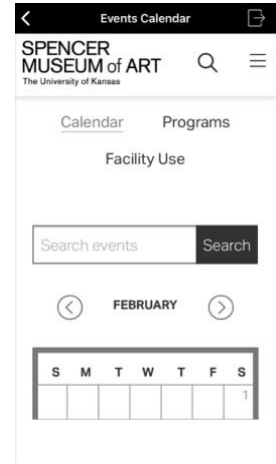
The Events Calendar page displayed full screen:
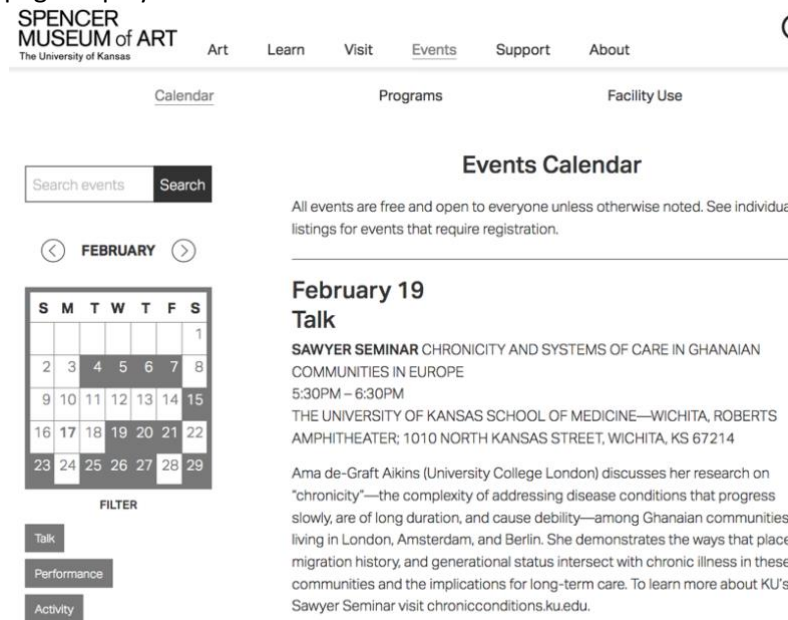
Another good example of this challenge is the "Visit" page. It is likely to be one of the pages that is most used from a mobile phone. Yet there are seven navigation elements that wrap onto multiple lines on smaller screens, forcing the most useful information (hours and holidays) further down the page, requiring a scroll.

LANGUAGE AND STRUCTURE

The language in menus and page content is very approachable. The site overall feels comfortable to read and understand what is being presented. One thing to test with users, and consider further in the future, is the "Programs" page. It may not be clear to the general public what a "Program" is, and you have to scroll some way down the page to get to the specific descriptions of some of the programs, which help people understand the types of things you present under that title.

Further effort is warranted in considering the overall structure of the site as a whole. There should be more of a flow between parts of the site, and each type of page template should have an inherent structure that fits not only the content, but where the content sits in the user journey and overall experience. As has been mentioned in meetings with the staff over the course of this project, it is important for the Spencer to feel "inviting" and approachable. Currently the structure of individual page templates and of the flow between pages feels like it requires more cognitive effort from the user for anything beyond a single fact lookup.

Page architectures help layer different levels of experience for different types of users, as well as guide a user through a multi-page experience that increases engagement and – ideally – serendipity in their experience of both the art and the narratives you hold.

VISUAL DESIGN

As with language and structure, visual design is important to lead the eye and help the user interpret where they are and what is possible for them to do. We appreciate that the common style for museum websites is a stark black-and-white visual presentation, in order to let the artwork itself stand out on the page. Yet that starkness in itself communicates to the user.

Discussing the various considerations of visual design is beyond the scope of this brief review. It will be valuable in any future redesign initiative for the Spencer team to involve a professional visual designer to help think through ways to support a multi-layered experience.

Observations from Analysis and Workshops
SMA IARI Digital Initiative

May 2020

CONTENTS

Introduction

This document summarizes Design for Context's (DfC) observations in support of the Spencer Museum of Art's (SMA) Digital Initiative, one part of the five-year, round-2 Integrated Arts Research Initiative (IARI) Mellon grant. This document does not prescribe specific actions in SMA's future direction. It provides current insights that we gained and outlines ways of organizing what was learned, so they can be folded into the next steps toward an Action Plan for Digital Initiatives that will be produced over the coming months.

During this initial phase of work, we supported a range of activities:
- Three in-person visits to facilitate meetings and analyze the current work and capabilities at SMA:
  - *November 2019* – Meet with all SMA staff for a two-day facilitated exploration workshop. Meet with the "Thinking Team" – a group of nine people, including the four members of the Core team, from across the SMA departments – to discuss their leadership of the planning and analysis. Each Thinking Team member is responsible for maintaining communication and involvement from their department staff.
  - *January 2020* – Support planning and facilitation of a symposium presentation by University of Kansas (KU) faculty and staff, demonstrating research projects they have done which either take advantage of data from SMA or provide ideas for applications and tools that could be useful to SMA. Continue meetings with SMA staff and the Thinking Team.
  - *March 2020* – Support planning and facilitation of a two-day visit to SMA by digital leaders from five institutions: The Art Institute of Chicago, the MIT Museum, Philadelphia Museum of Art's Library & Archives, the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the University of Michigan Museum of Art. Continue meetings with SMA staff and the Thinking Team.
- Review of the SMA website and App ecosystem.
- Review of background materials from SMA. Discussions with the Core Team and Thinking Team.

Our thoughts and recommendations aim to support the next steps in the initiative:
- SMA's visits to peer institutions.
- Preparation of the Action Plan for Digital Initiatives.
- Maintaining communication and short-term internal improvements.

Notes and transcriptions from the three meetings have been provided to the SMA project team and are listed below in *Appendix A: List of Associated Deliverables Documents* for reference.

THE DIGITAL INITIATIVE

As described in the Mellon grant:
> "To better document and disseminate the wealth of content across formats generated through IARI, the SMA would assess its institutional knowledge culture, including the capacity of its current content management systems and those available on the market."

The description goes on to outline the SMA's broad aims:
> "Our current and emergent needs for further integrated data management and archiving have come from IARI's aggressive pursuit of intersectional content. We would like to address what is needed to support practices across all of the Museum's culture and explore ways in which we can create a two-way street for content generation and record keeping that can be searchable by all audiences. Ultimately, we aim to develop our data archiving practices by considering our programmatic content and research

production in the same way we treat art object records, capturing inception, execution, and the continued life of programs beyond their initial production through a searchable archive."

In order to move toward the aims outlined in the grant, this first activity focused on gathering a wide range of insights and perspectives from staff, from KU faculty and from external museum digital advisors. The conversations from the three workshop visits provided a wealth of information on the opportunities and barriers to increased digital capabilities, as a contribution to future planned activities.

PERCEPTIONS ARE CHANGING

Between the intensive conversations over three visits and the reflections in this document, we have been facing the COVID-19 pandemic and contemplating the effects it may have. Perhaps in anticipation of this, one of the questions that was raised by the Thinking Team following the external advisors meeting in early March was:

If the museum disappeared, does the online presence still deliver on the mission?

I believe the answer is a qualified "yes." It will be interesting to discuss with the team whether there is a fresh articulation of what it means for SMA to deliver on the mission digitally, and what ideas are emerging.

There is no "going back to normal" – particularly since stresses in the "normal" were already clearly articulated in all the sessions with staff over the past six months. In the associated document *Day in the life - staff comments 2020-01.pdf*, there is a list of the aspirations and aims, along with current challenges, that were described in the all-staff meeting in January. These reflect a broad consensus among staff and leadership, providing a valuable "look into the mirror" as the Spencer considers its next steps and allowing seeds for reflection and planning at this particular time.

In the notes following the first workshop, DfC introduced a question that ideally remains important in ongoing discussions within the IARI digital Thinking Team and the Museum as a whole:

What makes the Spencer Museum of Art unique and valuable? What do you want to be good at?

General Observations

SMA IS SUCCESSFUL… AND AMBITIOUS

The Museum staff, students, and partners have achieved a tremendous amount with their digital capabilities, as well as their educational initiatives and programs. Engagement of KU faculty and students is high, and the reputation of the Museum appears to be strong on campus. The IARI program is very successful in both creating significant events and generating content that is valuable outside of the events themselves. Museums of all sizes, small to large, are impressed with what the small, potent team at the Spencer have achieved. It shows now only hard work, but vision and forethought.

That ambition introduces challenges, however, that need to be factored into future digital and operational planning. These will appear as examples and issues throughout this document:
- SMA has a tendency to say "Yes" when outside opportunities arise (from KU, artists, or other institutions). This is valuable for generating funding in lean times as well as expanding the institution's reputation – but it can increase staff workloads.
- Every new project has unique aspects, making them feel (somewhat) like they are entirely unique. When planning a new project, recognizing shared relationships across projects and understanding

what aspects are common among them is important. It is also helpful to define simplifying procedures for reducing effort on the routine tasks, which can allow the unique aspects to remain but reduce some project burdens.

- People can take on "hero" mentalities and work hard to deliver what is required – but there is a longer-term cost that can eventually undermine the organizational culture.
- There appears to be little scalability to absorb additional workloads, which introduces risk if someone should fall ill or leave. It is difficult to redirect a couple people to help someone on a specific task during a peak period, without creating more of a framework and procedures for how digital capture and content creation are created, allowing SMA to spread tasks if needed.

BALANCING WORKLOAD AND CREATIVITY

Continuing on from the previous section, during the January meeting we conducted a "day in the life" activity in order to identify current and desired attitudes about staff workload and their ideal time spent. It highlighted both the commitment of the staff and their hopes to be able to channel their energies creatively. This topic was addressed in the first two summary sections in DfC's January meeting document: *Reflections on Two Visits to the Spencer Museum of Art.pdf*.

The notes in *Day in the life - staff comments 2020-01.pdf*, captured on a flipchart during the group discussion, provides insights into both the current perceptions of workload challenges, and staff aspirations for their work environment. It will be important during the creation of the Action Plan to look for ways to create more consistency and efficiency in their engagement with digital tools and work.

"DIGITAL" IS NOT DISTINCT FROM OPERATIONS AND OUTREACH

The quoted "digital" in the title is intentional. As we have discussed, and was brought up a few times by the external advisors in March, it is impossible to separate digital capacity and requirements from SMA's strategy and planning around internal operations and external outreach and engagement. Any planning for digital initiatives must be woven into operations as well as communication activities, outreach to communities, and collaborative partnerships. Initiatives that are added *on top of* existing efforts, rather than woven into the work, will struggle to be successful.

In light of this, the upcoming Action Plan for Digital Initiatives could benefit from encompassing more than just digital capabilities. Digital capabilities and capacity are a key component of more broad-based planning for internal operational streamlining and external communications effectiveness. This could include:

- Identifying work processes that can be streamlined and documented
- Specifying communication formats for internal "situational awareness" during cross-departmental activities (such as exhibitions, artist visits, special events, and upcoming building renovations)
- Onboarding and work practices documentation and training for student workers and volunteers
- Allocating responsibilities across more staff for external communication and audience research

Major Themes from Analysis

IARI AND "HYBRID OUTPUTS" NEED A FLEXIBLE INFORMATION PRESENCE

The ongoing IARI initiative is an important differentiator for SMA in the museum community. It provides a strong focus for SMA to think about cross-disciplinary collaboration and pedagogy that can affect many more of its offerings.

As noted in the website analysis and in a number of conversations about IARI and the website, the current experience is fragmented. In the March meeting, Dr. Joey Orr began to home in on articulation of the desired breadth and scope that the experience of capturing and interacting with IARI materials could hold. Some points from that conversation (from notes captured on 3.4.2020):

- Reflecting intentions, conversations, methodological considerations
- Avoid collaborations as "institutional one-offs"
- Over time, people come to SMA *expecting* a research institution identity
- Making content portable is valuable – "go" where the users are
- Goal of *serendipitous experience* – an element of getting lost
  - Surprise = memorable, unique experiences and spaces
- Growing the collaboration over time, via new partners, additional data availability, promotion

For IARI to achieve a broader, long-term purpose, it needs to have an identity across the website, and a sense of the whole (and its purpose) in the way it is presented. Then it needs to be scalable, so additional content relationships and material can be added over time (references/citations, new material by the artist or curators, etc.).

PLAN PROCEDURES AND TOOLS FOR ROUTINE SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

In order to address the desire for greater process consistency and ease of action, codification and communication will need to be increased. Some of this will be resolved by the adoption (and effective configuration) of Asana as a project management tool, which will increase transparency of expectations and current status of actions.

When working through the Action Plan, we suggest that it is important to consider how people can be easily aware of the current status of activities that may affect them or involve them, without having to read through the details of dozens of projects, each with dozens of tasks, in a project management environment – a situation that can become inevitable with the number of concurrent projects and the long durations that are common with SMA and all museum projects. Consider ways of reporting out from status and management tools in ways that individuals can quickly identify what we describe as "situational awareness." This answers questions like:

- What am I responsible for in the immediate future, so I can take care of it now?
- What might be coming in the near future that could impact my work, directly (e.g. an assignment) or indirectly (e.g. an event or disruption in a space, so I have to work around that for another task)?
- What's new on the horizon, that I might want to know about or talk to people about?

The more that situational awareness can happen in the background – something that requires little effort to look up, read, or assess – the more it lowers a person's stress level or feelings of surprise. When combined with clear and consistent procedures for common projects and activities, the less time will be consumed.

INCREASE CAPTURE OF INFORMATION RELATIONSHIPS AND CONTEXT

SMA has taken an approach to presenting collections in the gallery based on different types of relatedness as well as contextual narrative – from the cabinet of curiosities to other arrangements of objects within the galleries. The mobile gallery explorer presents the objects together, as well, when looked at as they are presented in the physical gallery. This is a good start, but there is a significant amount of context and narrative that is not always available to guide inexperienced visits. And in the mobile experience, the navigation and size make it harder to go deeper into the curatorial intentions in the physical experience.

This is simply one example of a need for capturing data about relationships and context. At various points over the course of the past months, a desire to increase understanding of relationships has been voiced – whether the relationships are between objects, between concepts/research/performances in presenting IARI events and research, between educational use of art objects and supporting pedagogy, and others.

Capturing relationships and relevant context(s) can add to cataloging and content management effort. Yet it can also deliver tremendous value to users. Tuning the organizational processes, cataloging/content applications, and website description management will need to be done to make this feasible. A strategy can be put in place that helps make some of this work more "ambient" – where the information is captured as a by-product of another activity. Once the data is captured, it is a short step to rendering it as linked data for other uses.

Because of the conceptual nature inherent in the scope of IARI and the idea of "Hybrid Outputs," it is particularly important to identify how to capture concepts, context, and a range of relationships effectively, and then design the presentation of IARI content to take advantage of that information and enhance exploration and deeper engagement. As noted in an earlier section, IARI and other initial prototypes of linked data and exploratory interfaces will provide lessons, design approaches and tools that could open up new opportunities, products, and collaborations.

REDUCE SILOS AND INCREASE FINDABILITY (SHARING AND REUSE)

One of the common burdens in all museums is *finding information* – whether that is collection-specific data, information about current work and events, historic information, or internal/external resources and references. It is a substantial time drain. SMA has made strides to improve this situation by its extensive work in cataloging activities as well as objects in MuseumPlus, building out features on the public website, adoption of new software tools, along with training and "server cleanup days" with staff.

Yet, silos and the effort that is engendered remain. The Action Plan will need to focus on the full lifecycle of information in the organization and deliberately look for areas where the capture and sharing of information can be simplified.

A few principles that may be useful as SMA moves forward are:
- *Define "final" for formal content and documents:* Make clear, deliberate decisions about documents and images during key project milestones, to identify what should be kept, and why.
- *Establish "gold standard" examples:* Make future decisions easier by providing examples that guide decision-making.
- *Adopt simple, effective delivery tools:* If possible, separate data management and data delivery for most users, allowing adoption of a simple standard like IIIF and even linked data for navigation.
- *Find ways to apply existing contextual information:* The more your data and document management can capture known data about the context will reduce manual metadata entry requirements.

- *Start as you mean to go on:* Test procedures on a current/new active project, where people's focus and attention is greatest. Use this to train and build habits that can be used in future, as well as applied to older content collections from the past as time permits.
  - The agile software development concept of the "Backlog" could be a useful analog here – if you do something with a current event, exhibition, artist visit, or class… and it works… how much of the back catalog could also benefit from what you did digitally? Put the previous events into a backlog so that they can be picked up when that data is being addressed in another way.

Developing usable, flexible and scalable discovery and use environments – both internal and external – is also critical. Internal content use and access is not the same as external access, although they build on each other. Consider their capabilities in ways that meet different needs and security requirements.

INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY

Managing institutional memory and the SMA archives remains an important task to define in the Action Plan. For supporting "writing into the record" as a part of everyone's awareness and routine, the tools they use have to be tuned to include that activity – the "record" actions need to be happening naturally in the background as much as possible. One aspect of analysis that helps SMA plan for this will be to establish categorization schemes that help you assess what kinds of effort need to be applied and the types of uses that content may have in the future. For example:

- Specific responsibilities and "owners" for management and preservation (as described in the information about record schedules and retention policies that were provided by Marge Huang of PMA following the March meeting).
- Purposes for content storing and format management, as well as archiving: Reuse, internal research, external research, publishing/sharing, preservation, audit, etc.
- Actions required by individuals: Receiving/handling content, responding to requests, storing active content, cataloging, scheduling content, etc.
- Nature of appropriate use of stored content: Personal working materials, uses by team/project, department, internal SMA, external researcher, external public. This may have a supporting categorization with threshold criteria to migrate the content from one status to another over time.

There are going to be some types of content that are inherently challenging and deserve special consideration so as not to become burdensome. Example include:

- Email (much of which is not organizationally an important "Record") – defining *what is* a record and preparing procedures for handling that in simple ways is important.
- Time-based media (audio and video) and multimedia, held as collection objects, event/performance records or institutional archival records. These types of records can deteriorate quickly or be dependent on particular hardware/software that could be problematic to sustain.
- Paper records that need to be digitized and cataloged, either incrementally or as a batch.

It is important to keep the conversation active with the KU university archive, as opportunities for collaboration and sharing of equipment could be possible, particularly with a focus on *institutional* archives.

While it is vital to establish practices for capturing and managing content in a usable way, there may also be a role for "purposeful forgetting" – information gardening practices – to be specified in the Action Plan.

COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

Communication, both internally and externally, is vitally important as well as challenging given how small and busy SMA can be. With only one person formally tasked with communication, it is critical to establish shared responsibilities and norms to maintain an active presence and visibility with SMA's communities.

Following the January convening, DfC drafted a document with brief reflections from the conversations. Here is what was written about communication (from the document *Reflections on Two Visits to the Spencer Museum of Art.pdf*), to bring it back into focus for future consideration:

> Communication with the University, researchers and artists fell into a few different categories:
> - *Subject-focused*: Providing curricular/research resources, theme-based teaching, aligning object information to courses, providing both content and context,
> - *Outreach*: Public programs and tours, opportunities to work at/with the Museum, raising awareness of SMA, encourage visiting the objects in person, reaching marginal groups, presenting work by underrepresented groups, grant collaboration/impacts, increasing artist visibility, community/network-building, and engaging state-wide KU alumni.
> - *Operational*: Logistics information, real-time reporting (museum incidents), financial/operational information-sharing, and various types of statistics/reporting.

> Communication with the Lawrence and rural communities, and in some cases Kansas as a whole, came up in various points across the two days, including methods to integrate with community calendars, making active use of social media, promoting opportunities and programs effectively, fostering local partnerships (with artists, businesses, etc.), and creating digital mechanisms to collect feedback and input from the community. There was a desire to increase online resources that people can access on-demand across the state, but it was also pointed out that SMA can work with local public libraries in rural areas where Internet access is not universal.

> Two interesting statements to explore from the discussion about local community and Kansas were:
> - "*Making people aware of what we're about – beyond learning we exist.*"
> - "*The top 3 needs are about feeling welcome, belonging.*"

CONSIDER FORMALIZING SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES

Communication, described in the previous section, and education are good examples of areas where responsibilities can, and are, shared across SMA. But that sharing is not necessarily explicit and, where needed, trained. One thing that may help SMA is to look across its collaborative activities and formal procedures to identify areas that could benefit from "scaling up" during peak pressure points, then designating how that scaling can be done, and what support (or task relief in other areas) is required.

This is particularly important with the significant ebb and flow of student staff who support SMA.

SUSTAINABILITY

Many of the points above will help lead toward sustainability of initiatives and of content – as well as sustaining the nurturing and exploratory culture of the Spencer.

It will be very important as part of creating the Action Plan to look for opportunities for effective digital self-service, which can help visitors, partners and staff. *Effective* digital self-service is more than simply putting content online for people to access, or even making it searchable. It means identifying what kinds of content

people want and need, and then making sure it has an appropriate level of context and explanation to make sense to people who would like to use it. There are many examples of museums posting large volumes of content, where the results can be overwhelming and not clear to a user whether the content is relevant to their interests. And it appears that some of the implementations to "get our entire collection online" are making the works more approachable and engaging – or informative.

So, coupled with information sustainability will be a need to establish routine feedback loops that help SMA understand audience needs and how they are using content.

Alongside these practical considerations, part of the internal conversation at SMA over the coming year could include how much to rely on existing technology products (whether commercial or open source) – which may not suit your needs in all cases, and require you to adapt your working practices and level of effort – and where to decide that you want a more tailored, custom-built experience (which could involve open source as well as custom-coded software) that you then take ongoing responsibility for maintaining and updating when needed. This is not a blanket "either-or" choice. It will be a set of decisions that are based on organizational and constituent needs. Balancing those needs and the sustainability considerations will be an ongoing conversation. The criteria for such decisions can be a useful part of the Action Plan.

Appendix A: List of Associated Deliverables Documents

November 2019 staff workshop
- SMA summary staff workshop 2019-11.pdf
- Detailed materials:
  - Staff wkshop transcript IARI SSMA 2019-11-19.pdf
  - The Spencer - Day 1B - Get and Give Transcription.xlsx
  - The Spencer - Day 1C - Info and Tasks.xlsx
  - The Spencer - Day1D - Spencer Day 1 Workshop - Constituents and Needs.xlsx
  - Staff wkshp IARI Spencer 2019_Nov_19 Day 1 Powerpoint.pdf
  - Staff wkshop transcript IARI SMA 2019-11-20.pdf
  - IARI Spencer 2019_Nov_20 Day 2 Powerpoint.pdf

January 2020 convening
- Reflections on Two Visits to the Spencer Museum of Art 2020-01.pdf
- Detailed materials:
  - Day in the life - staff comments 2020-01.pdf
  - Staff discussion flipchart notes 2020-01.pdf
  - Communications discussion notes - Thinking Team and others 2020-01.pdf
  - Review of MuseumPlus and Cataloguing.pdf

February 2020 website/app analysis
- SMA App and Website Review 2020-02.pdf

March 2020 external advisors visit
- SMA external advisors flipcharts notes 2020-03.pdf
- External Advisors Visit - Team Debrief 2020-03.pdf

Appendix B: Updated *Questions for Future Discussions*

Following the staff workshops in November 2019, DfC captured questions that came out of the staff discussions and our own notes/thoughts. Some questions have been touched on in subsequent meetings, but these may warrant further discussion as the Action Plan takes shape. We have updated this list based on what has been learned since that time.

- What are the ideal features and structures for the information architecture of the SMA website(s), if there is agreement that mobile apps are passé? And are there risks or challenges to using QR codes?
- How do we present a collection that is very heterogeneous, not clearly focused?
    - What is the role of narrative, relationship navigation and context in self-service offerings?
- What do we mean by "accurate" data (or "more well researched") – what are our standards and latitude? Are there levels of completeness for collection data? Archival data? File metadata?
- Is content formatted and stored in ways that support other uses?
- How and where do we want to create crosswalks that share information between institutions?
- What can we do with, and what ways can we present, hybrid projects and research/information?
- How do we create systems that help us move forward, yet allow flexibility, change, and alternative ways of doing things to emerge?
- What should we know about open source opportunities? What are the implications for financial savings, control, and morality?
- What have students and artists done with our work; should we share that?
- How do we measure success? *[and ongoing value/progress?]*
- What do we produce that doesn't currently get recorded or captured for the future?
- Identify types of institutional memory items that should be kept/recorded? Examples:
    - Communicant type: outside of SMA, donor or member, artist, etc.
    - Will this [*information statement/document*] make sense in 50 years without this email?
    - Feedback/ praise that I can use in grant apps/ reports
    - Decision "events"
    - Interpretive impression, how to describe/frame something e.g. for APR
- We have a lot of audiences, should we serve all of them? Can we serve all of them?
- How do we bring in voices that are not represented internally, to get their perspectives?
- How does SMA carry on a self-reflection on our workflows, and how we can actually make things happen?
- The fact that so many people on staff are working in a reactive way should be evaluated. How can we change that?
- How do we manage to work all of this [additional digital creation and management] into our daily work flow?
- How to make sure the humanity of what we do isn't lost, and it's part of the Digital Plan?
- Consider that "digital" may have baggage associated, so call it something other than "Digital Plan?
- How do we evolve our digital strategy to be our own?
- How do we make sure that our digital strategy and planning remains in line with our four strategic directions?

Appendix C: Information Resources & Tools

Many different types of capabilities, resources and digital tools were listed during the initial November 2019 workshop, as well as some that came up in discussion on the second day of the workshop. They are itemized below for easy reference and captured in the detailed notes from that meeting.

Public-Facing Resources
- Social media
- Published announcements, posters, flyers, brochures
- Published content, research and storytelling
- Providing calendar information to others
- Mobile apps, and exploring their value/usefulness
- Education and educator resources and utilities
- Build and share stories from the collection
- Analysis of engagement, resource use, feedback
- Work directly with public libraries and others in rural areas
- Sharing info from our conservators; the stories we can tell from that
- Support others to contribute knowledge – different communities, academic specialists, others (could be done as facilitated processes digitally)

**Internal Productivity Resources**
- Calendar management (internal and external scheduling)
- Internal workflow management and visibility
    - Streamline processes, tie information management to project/activity milestones and completion points
    - Possibly integrate Asana as export to a filing/preservation system
- Integrate information resources (reduce silos), create cross-system relationships
    - Also reflected in: "Greater transparency of information"?
    - Findability for internal discovery environment for digital resources and cataloguing
- Identify or create easy to use interfaces for less tech-savvy people
- Staff education on digital tools and practices
- Guidelines (and governance) for what should be kept and simplifying where it is stored
- Unlocking/managing/accessing archives and historical information about SMA and its objects
    - Using valuable contextual information in tasks, answering questions from others
    - Capture the record of relationships with people, institutions
    - Streamline the capture of context data when content is captured
- Capture donor file information digitally, not just analog
- Preservation capabilities (art, archives, AV/time-based media)
- To explore alignment with visitors and constituents, could SMA create a visualization to map the relationship between the constituents and SMA's programs?

Collaboration Resources
- Connecting Museum content and resources with curricula, research
- Two-way research portal for sharing, collaboration, and expanding resources
- Work with commercial galleries as a gateway to artists, and their information
- Interact with peer institutions nationally – as host and in other venues
- Remote access to collection data
- Cross-collection discovery and collection search/research with other KU institutions (e.g. Library)
- How to record people's interaction with our content, e.g. when they do a poem about it

Spencer Art Apps Overview

ONLINE COLLECTION
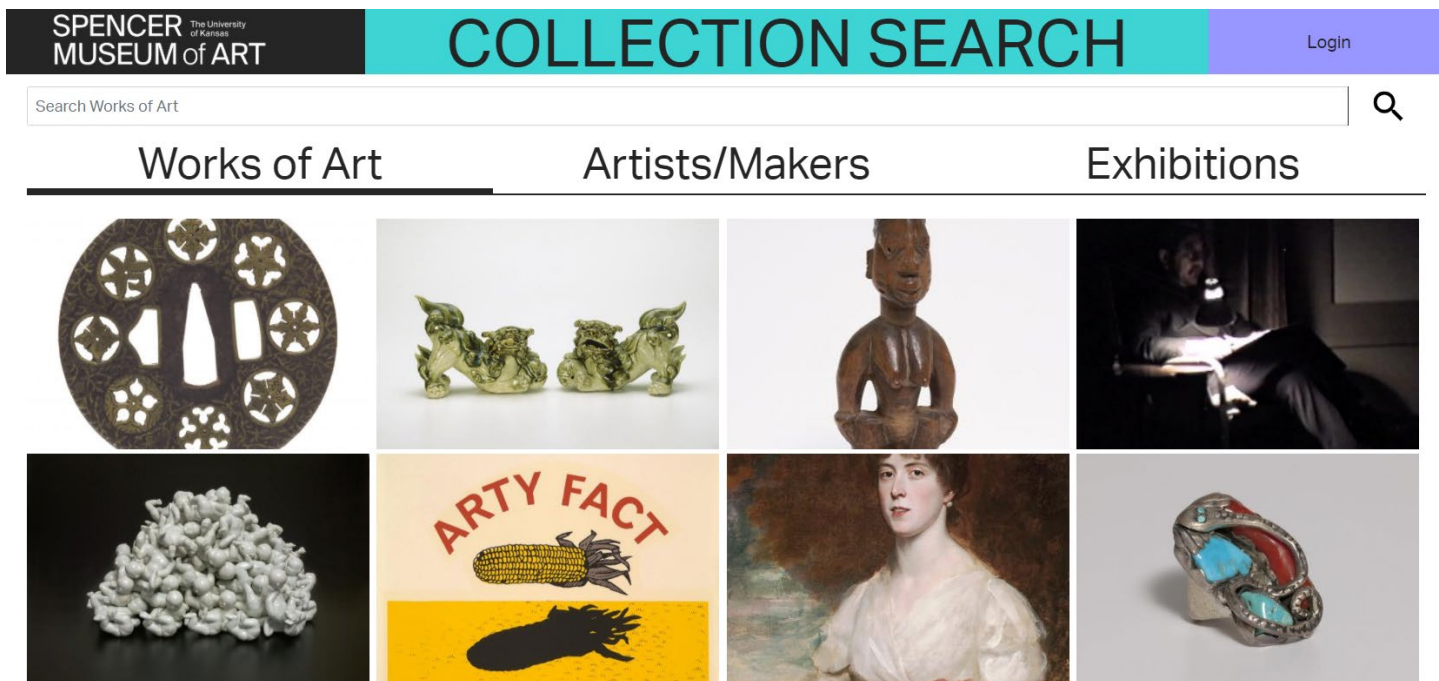
Launched: July 2019

Target Audience: General audiences globally, with emphasis on University instructors, students, and K-12 educators

Purpose: Increase access to and discoverability of the Spencer Museum's collection and its history.

Access: https://spencerartapps.ku.edu/collection-search#/

Developed in 2018-2019, the new online Collection Search allows for greater discoverability of the Spencer's collections, exhibition history, and records for artists represented in the collection for all audiences outside the Museum's physical building. The integration of all the research available for each object, including audio and video, are now easily available. The online collection also has functionality that allows KU users (faculty, staff and students) to login to retain a portfolio of objects for personal use and classroom development. With login functionality, users can also download higher resolution images of collection objects suitable for classroom presentations. These additional features will be made available to K-12 teachers in the future.

CURRICULAR RESOURCES DATABASE

Launched: August 2019

Target Audience: University instructors

Purpose: To share lessons used by KU instructors across disciplines to integrate Spencer Museum objects into their teaching and to inspire faculty to enrich their teaching with the Museum's collection

Access: https://spencerartapps.ku.edu/curricular-resources

Visitors to this database can search University course assignments that incorporate Spencer Museum collection objects. Geared toward university instructors at KU and other regional schools, this application allows educators to search by skills used, academic level, activity type, class size, and keywords. Assignments are downloadable and users are also directed through links to the page of the Spencer Museum's website for scheduling tours and accessing other university resources.

K-12 RESOURCES DATABASE

Launched: October 2019

Target Audience: K-12 educators in Kansas and beyond

Purpose: To support arts integration in K-12 classrooms and attainment of state teaching standards

Access: https://spencerartapps.ku.edu/k12-lesson-plans#/

This database offers teachers the ability to search K-12 lesson plans that were developed by K-12 teachers and pre-service teachers at KU based on SMA collection objects. Educators can search by standard code, grade level, keywords, and subject. The application includes downloadable lesson plans and includes links to other teaching resources, such as 3D images of collection objects.

COLLECTION TOURS

Take a virtual tour of works in our collection grouped by theme. Each tour features prompts to further contemplate works of art and learn more about the featured artists, mediums, and subjects.

Spencer Kids: Animal Tails (with audio descriptions)

Keep Calm and Breathe

Launched: April 2020

Target audience: Spencer Museum online visitors

Purpose: Deliver content originally developed for the mobile app accessible online and to broaden the reach of topic-specific tours.

Access: https://spencerartapps.ku.edu/collection-tours

The Collection Tours platform features object-based thematic tours that were previously developed for the mobile app. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic and audience shifts from mobile to desktop, the Museum developed the tours platform, rather than attempting to drive traffic to the mobile app which was designed primarily for in-gallery use. Users can browse a variety of tours, and take a virtual version of the tour that would typically occur in the gallery. Each tour features tour-specific multimedia and label content.

COLLECTION MAPPING

The World 1/1/2014 copyright 2014 www.worldhistorymaps.com
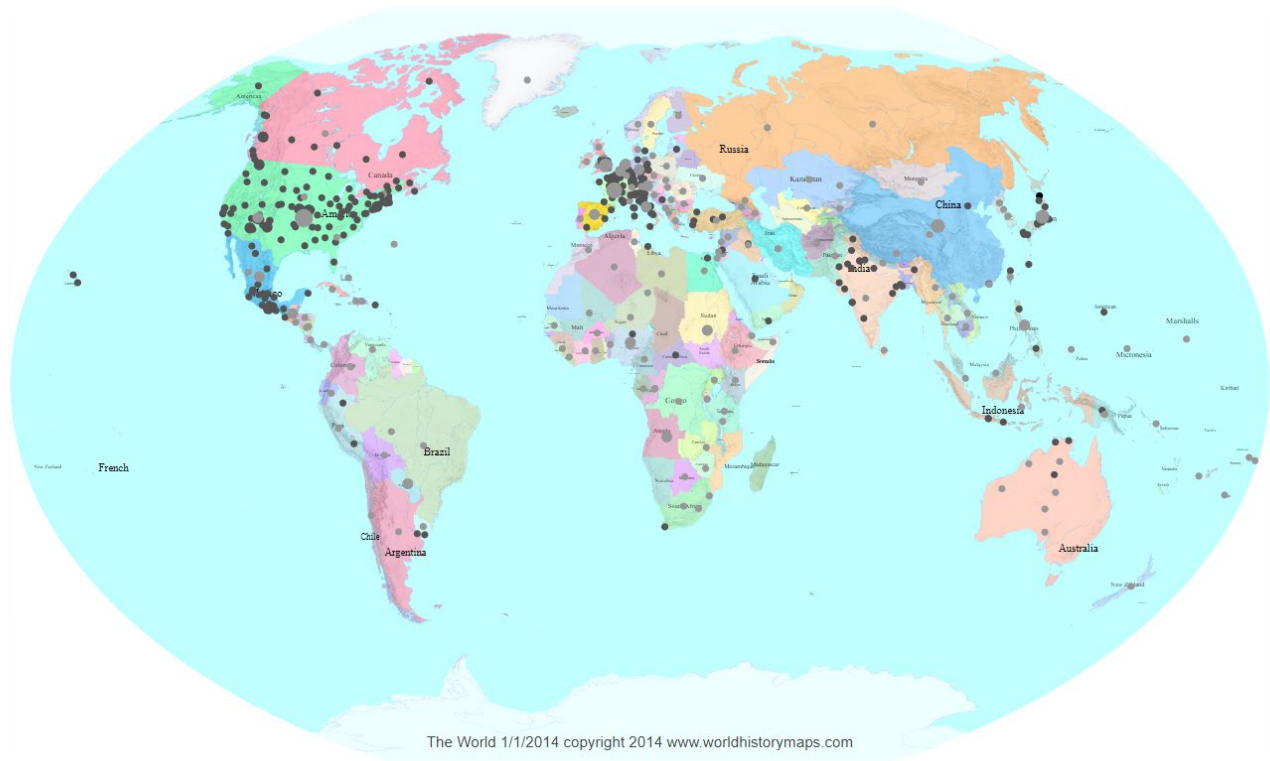
Launched: December 2019

Target Audience: Researchers, educators, and Spencer Museum staff

Purpose: To geo-map data about the Spencer Museum's 45,000 collection objects in order to reveal the geographic breadth of the collection and the visualize combinations of data points about the collection and artists/makers.

Access: https://spencerartmapping.ku.edu/

This application was developed with KU Professor of Electrical Science and Engineering Dr. James Miller from 2017-2019. Miller worked with Database Manager Hickerson to animate data about the collection across time, utilizing historic maps from -3000 to 2014. This application has been used by Spencer Museum staff in researching and enhancing interpretation of an exhibition, such as exploring the far-reaching origins of the Museum's founding gift and developing installations featuring works of art by artists who were very young or very old when they produced art and art by immigrant artists who were active in the United States but born elsewhere.

MOBILE APP
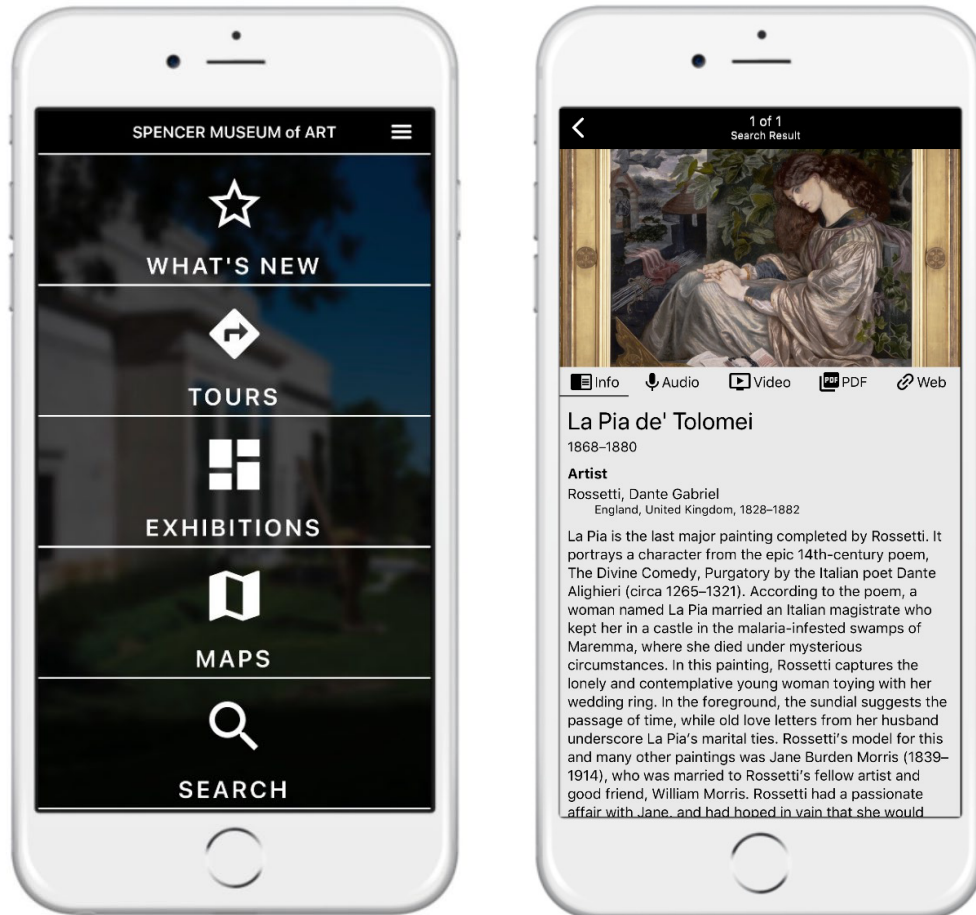
Launched: October 2016

Target Audience: Spencer Museum onsite visitors of all ages

Purpose: To enrich the visitor experience with multimedia content related to works of art on view, including videos, texts, audio descriptions, thematic tours, and assignments for KU classes.

Access: Free to download, available iOS (https://apps.apple.com/us/app/spencer-museum-of-art-ku/id982948318) and Android https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=edu.ku.spencer.spencertourapp).

The Spencer's app was developed in collaboration with KU IT – first app developed in-house at KU—to aggregate a large amount of interpretive content that was previously stored across multiple platforms and not easily accessed while visiting the galleries. Visitors are able to access multimedia and interpretive content of objects on display in exhibitions, thematic tours, and maps of galleries and layouts of objects in cases.