A Report on Library-Museum collaboration at the University of Kansas: The Spencer Museum of Art and KU Libraries

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June 2011

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Keeler Professorship.
This report stems from my activities as Keeler Family Intra-University Professor at the Spencer Museum of Art during the Fall 2010 semester. The Keeler Professorships allow KU faculty members to have one semester free of departmental responsibilities in order “to enhance their knowledge of an academic specialty, broaden the depth of a defined field of study or start a new academic endeavor and promote collaboration across disciplines.” My semester was devoted to learning about the museum profession; exploring the convergence of libraries, archives and museums in the digital age; and identifying areas of potential future collaboration between the Spencer Museum of Art (SMA) and KU Libraries (KULIB).

My activities during the Keeler semester included:
- one-on-one and group discussions with a wide range of SMA staff;
- participation in selected SMA staff and committee meetings;
- one-on-one discussions with KULIB staff and a brown bag meeting with KU Libraries staff and faculty;
- review and environmental scan of selected literature and collaborative initiatives;
- contributions to an IMLS grant application focusing on managing the SMA archives;
- participation in KU Museum Studies Program curriculum review committee meetings.

B. Summary
The Keeler proved to be a very beneficial experience, personally and professionally. In addition to significantly increasing my knowledge of the museum profession, my time at the Spencer Museum of Art has opened up new channels of communication between SMA and KU Libraries staff, and has led
directly to planning of new digital project initiatives (e.g. the digitization of the SMA Register) and to work on grant proposals (e.g. the IMLS grant to manage SMA’s archives). In addition, KULIB and SMA staff generated numerous ideas about future collaboration. These are listed later in this report.

KU Libraries and the SMA have distinct but complementary missions related to managing and providing access to scholarly and cultural materials, and the support of teaching, learning and research at KU. They share similar technical challenges related to acquiring, describing, preserving and providing access to data and content, especially in digital formats. More broadly, both organizations see their institutional role evolving to become one of deep, cross-disciplinary engagement with the research and teaching activities of the university community.

At a minimum, given the complementary roles of KU Libraries and the Spencer Museum of Art, both organizations can benefit from sharing each other’s perspectives. Deeper collaboration between the two organizations can provide opportunities to address some of their shared concerns and missions, to enhance each organization’s service to the KU community, and to raise KU’s scholarly profile regionally, nationally and globally.

SMA and KU Libraries have already been involved in significant collaborative initiatives, including providing online access to high-resolution digital images of objects in the SMA collection, as well as various other education and exhibition-related activities. (These and others activities are described later in this report.) These collaborations have largely been opportunistic, arising out of personal interactions between staff members, or relatively short-term planning for forthcoming events. Collaboration can thus be increased by:

(a) increasing opportunities for regular interaction and communication among SMA and KULIB communities, which will continue to stimulate ideas and allow projects to “bubble up” from staff and faculty engaged in related activities.

(b) exploring more strategically where there are further opportunities for long-term collaboration in areas such as resource sharing, IT infrastructure, data management, curriculum development and other programming.

Although this report focuses on SMA and KULIB, similar issues and opportunities likely exist with regard to other library, archival or museum collections on campus (such as the Natural History Museum, or the Dole Institute). In addition there are other initiatives or units on campus that could provide support for further collaborative activities. For example, The Commons and the Institute for Digital Research in the Humanities have interdisciplinary missions that closely align with the goals of KU’s libraries, archives and museums, and could provide support for collaborative efforts.

The remainder of this report (1) provides some background information about library/museum collaborations in general; (2) lists previous collaborations and potential future areas of collaboration between SMA and KULIB; and (3) makes some suggestions for future steps to promote further collaboration. It is not intended to be a comprehensive exploration of SMA and KULIB collaboration, but a snapshot of the ideas that emerged during my semester, with an emphasis on digital initiatives (which is my own area of expertise).

II. WHY LAM COLLABORATION?
Academic libraries, archives and museums (LAMs) share many common concerns related to acquiring, organizing, making accessible and preserving scholarly, historical and cultural materials. In addition, because LAMs have unique resources and LAM professionals have unique skills and expertise that span
academic disciplines, these organizations play crucial roles in campus-wide interdisciplinary teaching, learning and research. However, while they share many common concerns, roles and missions, they also come from distinct traditions. Training of library and museum professionals is typically undertaken in separate library science or museum studies programs, or in academic disciplines like art history and anthropology. These professions tend to have their own established standards in areas of professional practice such as metadata schemas, search and data management tools, polices on access, and differences in organizational and professional culture.

LAM collaboration has been the subject of much attention in the past decade or so, driven in large part by the Internet and digital technology, changes in user behavior and expectations, and new challenges for managing digital data and content. LAM organizations are facing and responding to similar challenges and pressures. Some common characteristics of the current LAM environment are listed below.

- Engagement with online visitors is becoming as important as engagement with in–person visitors.
- IT plays an increasingly central role in LAM activities.
- LAMS are creating information architectures that help support discoverability, access and preservation of physical, digitized, and born-digital resources. These systems should communicate well with each other, if not be completely interoperable.
- Copyright and intellectual property issues are complex and require significant attention (in many cases they are barriers keeping LAMs from publishing or providing access to content).
- LAM professionals must keep up to date with learning and implementing new technologies such as mobile services, web 2.0 tools, and virtual reality environments.
- Fiscal circumstances have been another incentive towards collaboration, as LAMs and higher education institutions in general attempt to move ahead in a time of severe budget shortfalls.

III. ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

There are a growing number of examples of LAM collaborations in the cultural heritage and higher education landscape. These collaborations range from one-time digital projects to combined outreach and instruction activities, organizational mergers, and physical co-location. The following section points to some examples of this range of collaborative activity. Also, see the attached bibliography for further articles and resources related to LAM collaboration.

A. OCLC research and reports.

OCLC <http://oclc.org> is one of the most active organizations exploring and promoting LAM collaboration. It has sponsored conferences on the theme of LAM collaboration, and produced several reports, blog postings, and conference proceedings. This literature focuses on both the nature of LAMs and general organizational issues related to collaboration. The OCLC report “Beyond the Silos of the LAMs: Collaboration Among Libraries, Archives and Museums” (Zorich, Waibel & Erway, 2008) identifies a number of potential activities along a “collaboration continuum” ranging from simple interactions (e.g., coordinating referrals), to project-based initiatives (e.g., creating digital exhibitions), to highly complex endeavors (e.g., building an integrated information architecture). It also identifies and discusses typical “catalysts” that make collaboration more likely to succeed. These catalysts include: leadership and vision, organizational mandates, professional recognition and rewards, institutional resources, administrative support, professional flexibility, change agents (an individual or department that keeps efforts alive), as well as external funding opportunities and pressure to keep up with peer
institutions. Conversely, barriers that hinder LAM collaboration include: vaguely articulated goals and strategic plans; individual LAM organizations residing in different administrative jurisdictions within the larger campus; and staff with a lack of flexibility and time to pursue collaborative activities. The report notes that despite many shared interests and challenges “LAMs tend to work independently of one another, and LAM professionals are schooled, trained and work within their respective fields...This focus severely limits collaborative opportunities—instead of bridging professional chasms, it deepens them” (p. 27-28).

B. IMLS Grants.
The Institute of Museum and Library Services <http://imls.gov>, a U.S. Federal agency established in 1996, has been one of the biggest stimulators of LAM collaboration, in particular through its National Leadership Grants (NLG) program, which has awarded over 100 grants focusing specifically on library/museum collaboration. Many of these grants have been focused on collections, events, or educational programs, allowing museums, libraries, archives and historical societies to work together to digitize a collection, create a digital project to increase access to resources, or provide educational and outreach programs for local or statewide communities. The IMLS website provides a complete listing of projects funded. (The Spencer Research Library and the Kansas State Historical Society received an NLG grant in 1999 to develop Territorial Kansas Online <http://www.territorialkansasonline.org>, a website with digitized Civil War-era documents from both institutions, along with K-12 and college level curricular materials based on the digitized content.)

C. Building Tools and Infrastructure.
Another area of LAM collaboration focuses on developing shared technical tools and infrastructure. A search engine that provides access to materials from various domains in a single search interface can improve discoverability and access to resources across LAM organizations. For example, the Smithsonian Institution’s Collections Search Center <http://collections.si.edu>, "provides easy 'one-stop searching' of more than 6.4 million of the Smithsonian's museum, archives, library and research holdings and collections." Similarly, the Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life at the University of California, Berkeley provides an integrated online database <http://magnes.org/collections> that brings together materials located in the collection’s separate archives, museum and library. Other universities have attempted to form internal collaborative initiatives to address the management of digital content and other assets. The Yale Office of Digital Assets and Infrastructure <http://odai.research.yale.edu> works with specialists from a wide range of units on campus to develop a university-wide digital content management strategy. The ODAI program extends beyond just LAM organizations, but Yale’s libraries, museums and archives all participate in the program.

D. Organizational and Physical Merging.
One of the most radical LAM collaborations among universities is at the University of Calgary, where in 2006 many of the university’s cultural heritage organizations were merged into one administrative structure. Libraries and Cultural Resources (LCR) <http://lcr.ucalgary.ca/> brings together the University Library, University Archives, Special Collections, the Nickle Arts Museum, the University of Calgary Press and other archival and visual resource collections. In 2011, a new state-of-the-art building, the Taylor Family Digital Library <http://tfdl.ucalgary.ca>, will bring the above units into the same physical location, increasing interaction among subject librarians, special collections librarians, archivists, curators, preservationists, and other LAM specialists. (The university Alumni office and the Student Success Centre will also be located in the same building, providing a chance for cultural heritage organizations on campus tap into other communities within the university.) The University envisions “an overlap so seamless that students won’t know who provided the service they’re consuming,” and cross-
departmental teams are working on plans for convergence of collections, technology, services and the cultural changes that will go along with these changes. Although this is not necessarily an approach that KU or most universities can or should take it will be interesting to monitor Calgary’s initiative over the coming months and years, at it represents an example of LAM convergence on a depth and scale not seen elsewhere.

IV. KU LIBRARIES AND SPENCER MUSEUM OF ART

A. Some similar roles, goals and missions
Collaboration between KU Libraries and the SMA should not happen just for its own sake; collaboration should be a means to an end that is beneficial for both organizations and the university as a whole. The SMA and KU Libraries do oversee unique content, serve related but distinct roles on campus, and need to retain autonomy and flexibility in pursuing their activities. However, the mission statements and long-term plans of SMA and KU Libraries clearly show that these organizations share a number of similar concerns, goals and missions. The following bullets are paraphrases of items that come from these strategic plans, mission statements, and similar documents:

- strive to be at the center of academic life (research and teaching) at KU
- pay increased attention to the library/museum as physical space
- strengthen fiscal standing and expand financial base
- enhance organizational effectiveness
- develop, provide access to, and preserve collections
- provide increased web access to digital information resources and objects
- make KU resources more visible locally, regionally, nationally, globally
- measure, assess, and communicate the value and impact of resources and services
- obtain external funding through grant writing and fundraising
- create, acquire and preserve new media and born-digital content

In addition, both SMA and KULIB are also playing an increased role in the creation of content through engagement with local arts organizations and with faculty researchers. And both organizations have an interest in making the research and scholarship of their own staff and faculty, and their contributions to their respective professions, more visible to campus and beyond.

These commonalities suggest that the organizations may benefit from further collaboration in certain areas in order to provide more effective services, build better infrastructure, and provide increased access to scholarly resources at KU.

B. Past and Current KULIB-SMA Collaborations
KU Libraries and the Spencer Museum of Art have a solid relationship and are (or have been) engaged in a number of past and current collaborations, some of which are listed below.

- **LUNA Insight digital library.** KU Libraries hosts LUNA Insight, a digital image collection and management system. In 2004 SMA began working with KULIB to put digital images of objects from the SMA collection in LUNA Insight for viewing online. Currently over 17,000 hi-resolution images of objects from the SMA collection are available to the public through LUNA Insight, which also offers tools for viewing, comparing, zooming and manipulating images. This is a different resource than the SMA’s own Museum Plus database, which makes records of the
complete SMA collection available online, along with lo-res images. *(The LUNA collection is in need of updating, see section V.B. below.)*

- **Instruction and outreach sessions.** In 2010 instruction librarians Tami Albin and Jill Becker collaborated with SMA academic programs & education staff and KU Athletics to create a 4-day long summer information literacy program for incoming student athletes. This program included research assignments making use of library and museum resources, and the creation of “Art Minute” narrations, for which each student wrote and recorded a one-minute response to a work of art in the SMA. This was considered a very successful program and there are plans to revise and continue the program in 2011.

- **Art & Architecture Library.** The Art & Architecture branch of KU Libraries is located in the same building as the Spencer Museum of Art and works closely with SMA curators (and with faculty in the History of Art department, also in the same building) to purchase and provide access to resources of interest to SMA curators and staff.

- **SMA and KULIB exhibitions.** KU Libraries’ Sarah Goodwin Thiel has been particularly engaged in working with SMA staff to prepare exhibitions at Watson library and other projects. Spencer Research Library and University Archives have provided loans of rare books and other material for SMA exhibitions. KU Libraries also provided chairs and tables for the Fall 2010 Dan Perjovschi exhibition in the SMA central court.

- **Events.** The SMA makes its courtyard and auditorium available for receptions, events and other programming, and the Libraries has organized events and speakers there.

- There are also other examples of small-scale cooperation, such as museum staff assisting the KU Libraries preservation department in preparing and packing rare materials for shipping to an external vendor.

V. IDEAS FOR FUTURE KULIB-SMA COLLABORATIONS AND PROJECTS

During the course of the semester, library and museum staff made numerous suggestions about additional ways the SMA and KU Libraries could work together. These ranged from ideas for specific projects, to creating opportunities for more communication and interaction, to more complex grant and planning initiatives. There is potential for collaboration at both the level of day-to-day work, and at the strategic planning level. In fact, there are so many areas of potential overlap that a discussion of general SMA-KULIB collaboration quickly becomes too broad to be productive. It would be more effective to identify narrower areas of mutual interest and form smaller groups to focus on those areas.

Below, I have attempted to list many of the ideas and suggestions made during the semester, organized into four broad categories. **This is not intended to be a complete listing of possible projects or initiatives, nor an attempt to prioritize potential future activities.** Some of the ideas listed below are described and conceived in more detail and build on previously accomplished work; others are more at the level of initial, exploratory suggestions.

A. Digital Projects & Content Related Projects

- **Digitize the SMA register and other publications.** The SMA Register has been published since 1951 and contains scholarly articles about objects in the museum collection, as well as articles
and news of museum events, purchases, and other activities. The complete backlist of the Register comprises several thousand pages, and would be a valuable collection of documents to make available online through KU ScholarWorks.

- **Organize and preserve the SMA archives.** The SMA Archives contains important documents representing 80 years of engagement with KU and external organizations in the areas of arts and research. These documents include donor files, exhibition files, publication history, photographic materials, audio recordings, education and public programming records, films, video recordings, and more than five terabytes of electronic records and digital media. SMA has limited institutional capacity to steward and facilitate access to this rich documentary legacy. In December 2010 SMA submitted an IMLS grant application to collaborate with KU Libraries, the University Archives, and the Museum Studies Program to "develop information management strategies and maximize institutional resources" to address this issue. Whether or not this particular grant proposal is funded, this is an area for future attention.

- **Ethnographic collections.** Through the course of discussion with Nancy Mahaney, Curator of Arts and Cultures of the Americas, Africa and Oceania, several ideas emerged for creating digital humanities projects utilizing the ethnographic collections currently stored in Spooner. Because of the limited access to these collections, it would be useful to undertake some innovative online interpretive programming involving descendant communities. The Heard Museum and the National Museum of the American Indian both have online programs where community members undertake the interpretation of cultural materials for online visitors. The development of this type of programming might naturally involve students from Haskell Indian Nations University who could serve as liaisons between the Spencer Museum of Art and the descendant community, in the process undertaking a type of auto-ethnography involving historic maps from the University of Kansas Libraries and cultural materials and works from the Spencer Museum of Art’s collections.

- **Audio content.** The SMA education department has produced “Art Minutes” podcasts in collaboration with Kansas Public Radio, and other audio content about items in the collection for cell phone tours. Some or all of this material could be made available online through the SMA website, KU ScholarWorks, or other access systems.

- **Collaborative exhibitions.** KU Libraries and SMA have already collaborated in creating exhibitions. It was suggested that the organizations continue to explore and expand upon this activity (e.g., using material from KU Libraries in SMA exhibitions, expanding SMA exhibitions to space within the KU Libraries, or other collaborative planning initiatives).

B. Technical Collaborations

- **Update LUNA Insight Digital Library.** Due to lack of interoperability between SMA’s Museum Plus system and LUNA Insight, it is very resource intensive to move data from one system to the other. The data in LUNA (over 17,000 images and associated metadata) has not been updated in some time and is not currently synchronized with the data in Museum Plus (which is updated nightly). The LUNA Insight collections need to be updated, and SMA and KULIB should investigate improved and more efficient ways of migrating this data, or other alternatives to providing access to high-resolution SMA images.
- **Data management.** Explore ways to manage digital assets including digital images, objects, and metadata, in a collaborative and interoperable way that leverages SMA/KULIB resources and expertise.

- **Single search of campus-wide resources.** Develop tools or databases that will allow users to search museum, library, and other cultural resources at KU in a single interface.

### C. Instruction, Outreach and Programming

- Continue the collaborative instructional program between SMA, KULIB, and KU Athletics, and look at expanding that model to other academic activities.

- Continue to develop and coordinate academic programs and content. KU Libraries has multiple locations on campus, high levels of foot traffic, and strong connections to academic departments through departmental liaisons and subject specialists. Explore ways that SMA can tap into those networks.

- Facilitate stronger connections between faculty, students and the resources of SMA and KU Libraries.

### D. Communication and Interaction.
Increasing communication and opportunities for interaction among the SMA, KULIB, and faculty and students will help foster dialogue and ideas, and help create awareness of each other’s activities. (For example, SMA has strong collections, resources and expertise that reference and subject librarians may not be aware of.) This can serve as a catalyst for further collaborations and coordination of activities. Possible ways to increase communication/interaction:

- Organize visits to SMA for reference and subject librarians, and cross-site visits for other KULIB and SMA staff.
- Form working groups focused on specific areas of interest.
- Organize a regular conversation/brown bag/presentation series.
- Organize a periodic or regular “cultural heritage forum” in which LAM staff and other interested parties can come together to discuss areas of mutual interest.
- Develop a shared listserv or mailing list.
- Sponsor a Keeler-like exchange program specifically for LAM organizations on campus, which would allow interested staff members to submit proposals to undertake temporary projects or short-term work in another LAM department or unit on campus.
- Explore joint training workshops or professional development opportunities for LAM staff to develop new skills.
- Joint sponsorship of university-wide events & joint news releases can help link the two organizations in the perception of the campus community.
- Explore opportunities for co-location of some staff members.
- Coordination of internship opportunities for students (e.g. students from the Museum Studies Program, or the Emporia State SLIM program).
- Organize meetings (regularly or as needed) to share notes on copyright and other issues of mutual concern.
E. Strategic Planning

- Explore further collaboration with the Museum Studies Program (MSP). Several librarians have taught or teach regularly in the MSP. As the Museum Studies Program reviews and restructures its curriculum there will be more opportunities to develop course content, internship opportunities, and other activities that bring LAM institutions closer together. The MSP will provide an opportunity to provide cross-LAM content instruction and work experiences to future museum, archives, and cultural heritage professionals.

- Explore further collaboration with other cultural heritage units on campus. Although this report focuses on SMA and KU Libraries, many of the points discussed here can apply to relationships with other organizations on campus, such as the Natural History Museum, the Dole Institute, and others. There are also other units and resources on campus that can help facilitate and support collaborative efforts, such as The Commons and the Institute for Digital Research in the Humanities.

- Form a “LAM council” for directors and administrators of museums, libraries and archives on campus meet to discuss strategic planning.

- Identify potential grant programs supporting collaborative LAM projects (including IMLS, NEH and others).

- Host conference or outside consultants/speakers to speak to explore more LAM collaboration.

- Get message out about LAM collaboration to alumni, friends and advocates groups.

VI. POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS

KU Libraries and SMA have already established a strong relationship that can provide a foundation for further collaboration. Some possible next steps might be:

- Assess and evaluate feasibility and resources needed to pursue ideas listed in Section V (A-C) above, prioritize proposed projects, and work with the Libraries’ Center for Digital Scholarship to pursue the digital project ideas listed above.

- Create regular opportunities for KULIB and SMA staff to meet and become familiar with each other’s activities and how technology is changing them (opportunities for relationship building). See Section V (D) above.

- Develop framework for strategic planning and support for collaboration. Continue to support opportunities when they arise, and allow staff flexibility to pursue those opportunities. Continue to create a supportive environment that allows collaborations to organically develop and flourish. See Section V (E) above.

The Keeler program was extremely effective at fostering new channels of communication and helping generate ideas for digital projects and other potential areas of collaboration. I believe it would be worthwhile to think about creating an ongoing program (perhaps unique in the LAM world) for LAM
staff at KU that would provide similar opportunities for professional development and immersion in related organizations on campus. In any case, providing a variety of opportunities for more staff interaction will be of great value to both SMA and KULIB, and will provide a way to build on the momentum already established during my own semester in the SMA.
APPENDIX: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY AND RESOURCES ON LAM COLLABORATION

2010 Horizon Report: Museum Edition
<http://www.nmc.org/publications/2010-horizon-museum-report>. The 2010 Horizon Report: Museum Edition, the first report in the series to look at emerging technologies for museum education and interpretation, was released today by the Marcus Institute for Digital Education in the Arts (MIDEA), the museum-focused branch of the NMC. Like the flagship Horizon Report released each January, this edition identifies six key emerging technologies for the next one to five years and describes trends and challenges surrounding their adoption. The technologies to watch for museums include mobiles, social media, augmented reality, location-based services, gesture-based computing and the semantic web.


“The collaboration imperative: If librarians want to lead in creating the digital future, they need to learn how to work with their colleagues in museums and archives”, Liz Bishoff, Library Journal, 01/15/2004 <http://www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA371048.html>

“Digital cultural collections in an age of reuse and remixes” by Kristin R. Eschenfelder and Michelle Caswell. First Monday, Volume 15, Number 11, 1 November 2010 <http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/viewArticle/3060/2640>. This paper explores the circumstances under which cultural institutions (CI) should seek to control non-commercial reuse of digital cultural works. It describes the results of a 2008 survey of CI professionals at U.S. archives, libraries and museums which gathered data on motivations to control access to and use of digital collections, factors discouraging control, and levels of concern associated with different types of unauthorized reuse. The analysis presents three general themes that explain many of the CI motivations for control: “controlling descriptions and representations”; “legal risks and complexities”; and, “getting credit: fiscal and social costs and revenue.” This paper argues that CI should develop a multiplicity of access and use regulations that acknowledge the varying sensitivity of collections and the varying level of risk associated with different types of reuses. It concludes by offering a set of examples of collections employing varying levels of reuse control (from none to complete) to serve as heuristics.


“Metadata for all: Descriptive standards and metadata sharing across libraries, archives and museums”, Elings, Mary W., and Waibel, Günter. First Monday [Online], Volume 12 Number 3 (5 March 2007).


Silos of the LAMS: Collaboration Among Libraries, Archives and Museums <http://www.oclc.org/research/publications/library/2008/2008-05.pdf>. This report highlights lessons learned from five LAM workshops held at RLG partner institutions in the US and the UK, and contains information about inspiring collaborative projects in campus environments. The bulk of the report, however, is dedicated to the catalysts that allow collaboration to thrive. These insights should be helpful to anyone who is trying to foster deep relationships (OCLC Research, 2008).


