# Bridging the Gap: Archives for Learning and Education Script

As Librarian and Archivist we will be talking about using student work, past and present, historical and more recent, for learning resources, including sketchbooks, portfolio work, and visual reflective journals, which we have been working on collaboratively with FE academic Katherine McKee (who unfortunately couldn’t be here today). We will be giving the background and rationale towards the project, how it is being carried out, any risks and issues behind it, and future plans. Firstly, however, I’ll briefly give some background to UCA and the collections held.

To introduce UCA although established as a university in 2008, we are comprised of various mergers of art schools that have existed since the 1870s. Our geographical split is currently two campuses in Surrey (Farnham, and Epsom) and three in Kent (Maidstone, Canterbury and Rochester) which all have archives and special collections, of which I cover all.

Our archives and special collections consist of individual artist archives, including the Bob Godfrey Archive (1921-2013) (taken into library management from the Animation Department this year), organisational art archives, including The Diagram Group, book publishers, and our institutional archives, including the six former Art Schools, which includes student work, from the 1950s.

On my appointment as Archivist, priorities naturally at first were cataloguing, preservation, and looking at ways to integrate archives into the curriculum. My role is also to seek out records, and see which records are currently being held, within different schools and departments, that should be placed within the archives and special collections.. It would be preferable to have archives and special collections centralised in each campus rather than spread out throughout departments.

To ensure that archives is seen as an essential part of teaching, and is integrated and embedded within courses, then collaboration and working with members of Library and Student Services staff is vital. This is particularly true of our Librarians where learning and teaching is essential, and where there are good relations with lecturers. Initially talking to librarians led me to discover lecturers who have used archives in their work, and led to a project where students used digital images of archives for curation purposes. Collaboration with careers led to a joint workshop, looking at how archives may be of use in developing a project for an internship for the Association of Art Historians. Word of mouth and communication with front line staff who deal with students every day is essential.

Ways to promote interest have included travelling displays around campuses of our archives and special collections. Selecting this material to display in the first instance was chosen by looking at advice from front line staff and academics.

In the Creative Arts there is a higher proportion of dyslexic students than any other – hence while selecting material that is aesthetically pleasing is always important, it is even more vital here. Students also learn from past examples of work, which can provide inspiration for future work - for example two enquiries where from students related to 1970s sculpture work, exhibitions and studio space. Speaking to academics, including Graphic Design lecturers, Time Based Media, and Architecture, and on the Animation course, created by Oscar winning animator Bob Godfrey, the history of academic classes at the specific colleges, is also of real interest. There is also a ‘looking at different eras’ project in FE.

Student work, including sketchbooks, can often draw on personal experience and can tell a personal story, through the lives of ordinary students. Ordinary lives are important to document, as that is who students will relate to. The story of individual students can document history of diversity and equality (or lack of) in an institution, and they can be vital resources in the study of the student experience challenges, including background, integration, and disability, in the university, and gives a voice to a wide range of students who pass through our doors.

On this basis, material selected for the travelling exhibitions, were 1950s Graphic Design student workbooks from the Medway College of Design, and prospectuses, and student magazines. The sketchbooks particularly attracted comments from lecturers (with a request from a Graphic Design lecturer for them to be digitised) and students who asked to look at them further.

Student work therefore looked like a key area to focus on to bring archives into the curriculum specifically through sketchbooks, or journals

From here from advice from librarians ,regarding which academics were specifically interested in student journals and students sketchbooks, (to seek which courses would have most interest in them) and given that I am also looking to develop and add to our current archives and special collections, I contacted Katherine McKee, Academic, who is interested and invested in research methodologies of student journals, and specialises in Further Education. Katie had collected about 500 recent student Further Education visual reflective journals or sketchbooks (from 2000 onwards) either digital only (whether born, or whether only the digital copy remaining), or physical ,and had begun the process of scanning the material for using the material for teaching and learning possibilities.

There is recognition from the FE department of the necessity to embed these journals and past student work directly into the curriculum. Katie’s interest in collating this material is due to interest in research methodologies in Visual Reflective Journals, and also exploring the difference between a Visual Reflective Journal, which involves analytical work, as opposed to a sketchbook, which is more of a jotting of thoughts or images.

Each year FE students produce a range of high quality journals and one or two have donated them to the Further Education departments, for future use as learning guides for new incoming students. Through donation they have managed to build up strong examples of visual journal practice. However, Katie has stated that reliance on the ‘hardcopy’ limits their use and accessibility for our extensive numbers of students, especially given that students (and journals) are dispersed around five campuses.

Having the hardcopy is naturally of importance, however, especially as original examples have physical layers and textures that can’t be produced digitally. However, as students naturally want to take their work with them, having a digital representation of the work will allow this work to be remembered, used and preserved. The Library’s Digitisation Unit can help with Digital Preservation aspects.

Working with the FE department has also made other courses and levels interested regarding their own student journals and sketchbooks. MA Fine Art (with students’ permission) have deposited students work in the archives (in different formats, including audio) from different modules, which include journals and sketchbooks, with displays taking place when the new course starts. Digitisation may be explored later.

Hence, while this is originally FE related the aim is to build up on this to include all disciplines and all levels.

FE are interested in research methodologies in Visual Reflective Journals, for the first part, in digitisation, and our historical student sketchbooks can be used in learning and teaching to illustrate differences between journals and sketchbooks, and also examples of different ways of working. This material will be used in study sessions as a learning and teaching tool by academics and Information Professionals. This may also allow for research outputs regarding research methodologies.

However, having these collections online also allows for other projects or research potential. For example this tool could also have future marketing potential regarding the quality of student work. The recent material, will contribute to the academic history of UCA. The project could also encourage further donations, whether in physical or digital form, of past student work.

I’m going to pass you on to Adele, who is going to talk about and how the project fits in with the library’s in-house developed Academic Literacy framework

**Why has a librarian become involved with this archive project?**

UCA’s Library and Student Services Strategic aim is, “To deliver outstanding resources and services which promote excellence in learning, teaching and research in the creative arts.” We wanted to ensure that these archive resources were used to best advantage and were incorporated into the existing learning and teaching programs used by librarians.

The librarian role at UCA, like many other universities, has a focus on teaching and learning enhancement. We support students on Further Education to PHD. The majority of our time is spent on the planning and delivery of information and academic literacy skills. This takes the form of a point of need delivery in which our support for students is fully embedded into the curriculum, making our teaching and learning enhancement fully relevant to their academic work and studio-based practice.

Librarians ensure continued, high quality and most important across a geographically challenged four site university , consistent support by structuring the teaching we provide adhering to something that we term the Academic Literacy Framework or ALF.

What do we mean by Academic Literacy? It is a term that is accepted in academic & learning development circles. We chose this phrase as we were seeking to find a term that encompassed the work of Study Advisors and Librarians and had a broader remit than Information Literacy. We have defined it this to mean: “Those attributes necessary to becoming a successful student”. We include in this principles of academic integrity, information literacy, study skills, as well as broader skills such as problem-solving, communication and team-work.

Our starting point in the task was to link the student experience with course learning outcomes and employability. We also want to make sure we’re speaking the same language as academics & to avoid terminology that has little meaning outside library circles. In order to achieve this, we decided to consult the same documents used by academics in course planning and development

This led us to QAA student benchmark profiles for art & design, HEA student employability profile, Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services AGCAS.

Quotes we used from UCA Employment and Entrepreneurship Strategy; HEA Student Employability Profile; QAA Subject Benchmark Statement: Art & Design, can be seen on the accompanying slide.

The key areas that we aim to support in our work with students are, the student journey (being a student) and the research process and producing work.

We define the student journey as the general elements which are crucial to learn in order to be a successful student. They also reflect attributes considered important to employability.

* Communication
* Team / Group Working
* Motivation
* Problem-Solving
* Understanding the student role (e.g. coping with tutorials)
* Self-management: time management, planning, organisation
* Professional practice (e.g. producing an artists’ statement)

The research process and producing work are defined as the skills needed for researching and producing work. Many are common to the research process for both written work and studio work.

* Concept Development / Idea Generation / Mind-mapping
* Note-Taking
* Effective Reading Techniques
* Presentation Skills
* Academic Integrity – Citation / Referencing
* Essay & Dissertation Writing
* Defining the topic – key wording
* Finding quality sources of information
* Evaluating information
* Synthesis / using evidence
* Reflection
* Critical thinking and analysis

As the creative process can be better described as on-going – and distinct from more academic research or tasking’s which may often work towards a fixed goal, artistic output has no defined conclusion. One question the artist has to ask themselves is have I finished? And so the relevance of the ALF can be better seen when viewed alongside artistic practice.

Creative endeavours are cyclical and so we look to facilitate this by establishing which skills would be used and re-used throughout the creative process

The ALF diagram illustrates these thus: the pink is the students’ creative research circle. Around the outside are the practical elements librarians and study advisors assist with, in the middle we’ve put the transferable/employability skills students develop with us. Currently, study advisors assist students directly with the areas in the employability circle, especially in their one-to-one work. Librarians and the archivist don’t run sessions solely on these topics, but students are developing these skills almost as a by-product. For example, students use and develop communication skills in small group work and feeding back to a larger group presentation/pitching and crit stills are a vital element of work in the arts.

The sketchbooks as you have seen cover all aspects of the creative process from identifying the area of interest all the way round to what next? And so they can be used excellent tools to illustrate the skills identified in the Academic Literacy Framework, to inspire students and allow them to explore techniques and skills that lie beyond the realm of the sketch book itself. The most obvious use for the sketch books in teaching it using them to illustrate techniques and inspire others to develop similar practice and develop skills. However through the use of the ALF to design workshops we are able to engage students in learning, discussing and considering how the sketchbooks can be used to explore other attributes.

Let’s take a quick look at 3 examples of pages and explore how we would use them with the students in one of our sessions.

**Katy Simms FMP Fine Art Rochester 2007**

Here we see Katy’s work produced in response to a visit to the Chris Oplis exhibition The Upper Room at the Tate Britain. Here we can see that she is using the key skills identified in the ALF:

* Gather information
* Select information
* Refine and expand an idea
* Articulate it – say , write it , think it

**James Stenhouse Final Major Project ACCESS Canterbury**

Here we see some research James has done on the sculptor Ricky Swallow on this one page alone he is :

* Showing research
* Seeking information
* Gathering information
* Selecting information to use
* Managing information
* Evaluating information
* Using evidence

We would further use this page in a workshop to encourage discussion about how students can use this artistic means of study and reflection as the basis for moving forward into the academic process of essay research, planning and writing.

For looking at dissemination with digitisation we have a dedicated Digitisation Unit based in our Farnham campus (that also does external jobs!), that deals with archival material and we also operate Turning the Pages Technology, where we are currently putting the journals on. Turning the Pages Technology allows for a number of multimedia tools, including videos which will document processes of developing a journal, from librarians and academics, and study skills advisors, alongside contextual information about the journal itself, which would provide study skills advice, including difference between sketchbooks and journals, and looking at the history and development of academic courses. We would also look to have recordings from the students themselves describing the process of developing the journal, and would invite videos regarding responses to the journal, on social media, as a crowdsourcing process, helping with the cataloguing.

Here copyright is a key issue. For recent students’ work we would ensure we have a Creative Commons form for students to sign. For our 1950s sketchbooks that are orphan works, it is next to impossible to track down people, so we would need to follow JISC’s guidelines for orphan works, and operate a takedown policy. For the Visual Reflective Journals, however, the real issue is the third party material that students necessarily use for their research projects, the extent of which means that it would be impossible to seek copyright. While it is possible to have an offline Kiosk version of the sketchbook, as the offline kiosk version does not work on MACS, and as most creative arts students only use MACS for their work, this is not suitable. Our Digitisation Unit, which is being developed to be a centre for advice in the university for copyright issues, has contacted JISC to seek advice, where they advised that, if the material is in the background – or not the main focus of the work, then the legislation dictates that it is ok, and suggested that we develop a risk assessment, that would look at whether the benefits for students would outweigh the risk, and a disclaimer, including a takedown policy.

With cataloguing, the physical sketchbooks have been and will be catalogued on CALM, where we would put links to the digital image, to maximise accessibility. The digital images will be catalogued using Dublin Core.

The material will initially be made available internally for students on blackboard learning, MY UCA with password protected URLs, until we look at developing a risk assessment for external online access. We will be looking for internal funding for digitisation of journals from FE and further levels yearly, and will be expecting deposit of hard material from MA Fine Art into the library. We will looking to build up interviews from practicing artists, informational professionals, academics, and students, and will be regularly undertaking workshops. We intend to measure the impact of this project by our usual methods, such as seeking evidence in the work.

Bridging the gap-a challenge for us all in archives – however, one made a lot smaller by collaboration, digitisation, accessibility, and of course creative thinking!