

Volume 3, Issue 2, 2012

Article

Strengthening On-Campus Relationships via an Annual Student Art Commission

Astrid Oliver Fort Lewis College

Abstract

Reed Library developed an annual student art competition in partnership with the Art Department at Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado. The partnership provided students with a real-world art commission experience, increased collaboration between the Library and Art Department, raised awareness of the Library across campus, and created a system to exhibit new art in the Library.

When a new Art Department faculty member came to Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado from the Herron School of Design in Indianapolis, he brought with him knowledge of a student sculpture competition at the Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis University Library. A casual conversation between the faculty member and the interim director of the John F. Reed Library at Fort Lewis College became a collaborative effort between departments to create an annual student art competition, resulting in a commission to produce a work of art that would be housed in the Library for one year.

Project Initiation

Shortly after their initial conversation, the Library Director contacted the chair of the Art Department to determine interest in developing a partnership to create a student art competition. Both realized that the competition could result in several positive outcomes for the art program: students would have exposure to a real-world commission experience prior to graduation; the winning student would have an excellent addition to his or her portfolio and résumé; and a new venue for art would be created outside of the Art Department, in a more public area. For the Library, publicity from the event would also have positive outcomes: it would provide exposure to the Library and generate interest in it across campus; the Library would have the opportunity to develop a stronger relationship with the Art Department; and an event could be created around the art commission to draw more people into the Library. Representatives from the Library and Art Department met to develop the details of the competition and commission process.

An early step was to learn more about how other libraries have implemented art competitions. Jennifer Beals (2007) indicated that little literature existed regarding exhibitions of student art in academic libraries. Since that time, more has been written on the subject. "Art in the IUPUI University Library" described the impetus for creating a sculpture contest in the library and the lessons learned about managing major art installations (Lewis & Schmidt, 2007). With a focus on creative initiatives, Beahan, Graveline and Taxman (2009) discussed ways in which collaborative opportunities between the academic library and its campus partners can be used to support the arts on campus. Waibel, Zorich, and Erway (2009) wrote about the "increasing rewards and risks of interdependent working relationships along the collaboration continuum" (p. 17) and highlighted catalysts that promoted collaborative action. In 2004, Retting stated "art has an educational purpose that resonates with the library's academic mission" (p. 5).

Identifying Space and Format

The first decision was location. Should students be allowed to identify a space within the library where they would like their work to be displayed and make that decision part of the proposal, or should the project leaders decide on the space that the student applicants must use to design their proposals? The first option was rejected because it was too open-ended and possibly difficult to accommodate. The second option seemed easier to implement, so a single space would be selected. The format of the artwork

needed to be considered in the selection of space. Would proposals be restricted to a single medium, such as sculpture or painting? The Art Department emphasized a need for flexibility and an ability to accommodate a variety of formats. This would enable all students to enter the contest regardless of their preferred media. It was decided that no restrictions would be placed on format as long as the work fit within the designated space. After some discussion, a corner space of the library was identified to house the artwork. One wall measured approximately eight feet high and six feet, seven inches wide; the other wall was eight feet high and seven feet, nine inches wide. Proposed projects could hang, stand or be encased in this area. The maximum case size could be three feet wide, two feet deep, and two feet high.

Competition Components

Reed Library allocated \$500.00 from its operating budget to be awarded to the winning student. The winning proposal applicant would be paid \$250.00 upon selection, with the remaining \$250.00 being paid following the completion and installation of the work.

Reed Library and the Art Department then determined a timeline for advertisement of the competition, proposal deadline, winner selection, project completion, and final installation. All full-time, degree-seeking Fort Lewis College students in any major were eligible to apply. Applicants had to be enrolled for a minimum of twelve credit hours in both the fall and spring semesters of the fiscal year of the commission.

The Art Department created a Call for Proposals that required the following elements:

- contact Information:
- a written proposal up to 500 words describing the proposed work, including any thoughts or philosophy behind the work;
- a visual project description with a minimum of one image describing the project (photo, drawing, model, digital image or anything else that visually describes the concept);
- one page resume;
- one page budget including the estimated cost for all facets of project production and installation;
- installation procedures or special display requirements for the given space.

Reed Library and the Art Department disseminated the information across campus. The Call for Proposals was handed out in class to all student art majors, sent electronically to the Fort Lewis College student listserv, and posted on notice boards across campus. An icon was created and displayed on the library website, and posters were hung in the library to further advertise the competition.

A Selection Panel of two representatives from the Library, one Art Department faculty representative, one student majoring in art, and one at-large campus representative was created to determine the winner of the commission. The inclusion of an art major in

the selection process not only served to vary the makeup of the committee but also provided valuable experience for the student. The decision to involve an at-large campus representative also served to increase the diversity of the panel and garner additional interest across campus. Each applicant had to submit five copies of his or her proposal to the Art Department's administrative office by 4pm on the given deadline. The proposals were then distributed to the five Selection Panel members for the first round of review.

Selection Criteria

The Selection Panel met twice to make its selection. Prior to their first meeting, each member reviewed copies of the proposals and evaluated them using a rubric that had been developed previously by the Art Department and Library (see Appendix A). The proposals were judged on the clarity of the proposal, the intellectual and creative caliber of the artwork, the feasibility of its installation, and the compatibility of the artwork with the designated space.

At the first meeting, committee members compared their individual rankings and as a group selected the top three candidates. Those applicants were then contacted and asked to present their ideas to the Selection Panel. During the presentations, the Selection Panel used the rubric again to judge the top three finalists. The presentations served as an opportunity to ask questions and clarify any confusing points about the proposal. It also gave the artist the chance to expound upon his or her idea.

Competition Results

Seven submissions were received in the first year of the competition. Four proposals were for three-dimensional pieces and two were for two-dimensional pieces or paintings. Although not required, all submissions made a reference to the pursuit of knowledge in some sense, as would be fitting for a work of art that would be housed in a library. The proposed works were also all large enough to fully fill the designated space. The three finalists had each submitted a proposal for a three-dimensional piece. One project was a moving sculpture that depicted a fanciful flight of books as if they were kites. A second proposal was a wooden abstract sculpture that could be used doubly as seating as well as a work of art. The third and winning submission by Fort Lewis College junior Sara Swoboda was a handmade, mirrored well entitled *The Well of Infinite Knowledge*. In her submission, Swoboda described her project as alluding "to the vast amount of information found in libraries, their connection to the universe of all human knowledge, and the image of the well as a primal source of life's sustenance." The Selection Panel was unanimous in its decision to fund this proposal.

Ms. Swoboda was able to stay within the time frame allowed for the development and completion of the piece, and in March of 2011, *The Well of Infinite Knowledge* was installed in Reed Library (see Appendix B). The work was accompanied by an artist's statement that described the creative thought process behind the piece for viewers. At the start of the fall semester in August a reception was held to recognize the work.

Faculty, administration, students, and the artists' friends and family attended the event. It was a very celebratory start to the new semester, and throughout the year *The Infinite Well of Knowledge* remained a constant source of attraction to library patrons.

Organization and Documentation

To keep the competition running smoothly, organization and documentation was very important. The project required two calendars to keep everyone on deadline. An organizers' calendar that considered all elements of the competition process and included times for Library and Art Department representatives to meet and discuss project details was developed first, and then a calendar that applied to the artist and completion of the artwork was created.

It was determined that the Call for Proposals should be released in the fall. The Selection Panel would announce the winning proposal before winter break, and the work of art would be completed and installed in the Library by the end of the spring term. The artwork would remain on loan to Reed Library for one year. The artist would be responsible for claiming and removing the work after that time, so that space would be available for the next winner of the competition. The artist's calendar consisted of the proposal due date; a finalists' presentation date; the announcement of the winner; the final date for completion and installation of the artwork; and the date of the dedication ceremony and reception to formally introduce the piece. Reed Library was responsible for monitoring and ensuring all deadlines were met for each stage of the competition process. A faculty advisor from the Art Department was assigned to advise the winning student and ensure that work was proceeding in a satisfactory manner.

In order to ensure collaboration between Library staff and Art Department faculty and to develop a sustainable competition, the following documents were created to record the procedures, timelines, and responsibilities of the organizers:

- art competition overview detailing general procedures, dates and responsibilities of involved parties (see Appendix C);
- call for proposals (Appendix D) and floor plan of Reed Library (Appendix E) indicating the proposal space;
- finalist announcement;
- congratulation and rejection letters for applicants;
- requisition for student payment;
- evaluation rubric (see Appendix A);
- student contract and art on loan agreement detailing the responsibilities of the student and the Library and the terms of the loan (see Appendix F).

Creating written documentation helped ensure that any person from the Library or Art Department could manage the competition in the future.

Lessons Learned

Collaboration with the Art Department was remarkably easy. After the initial agreement to develop the competition and commission, personnel from the Art Department and the Library met only four times to determine processes and procedures. A final wrap-up meeting between Library and Art Department staff was held at the end of the project cycle to review suggestions and comments. Thanks to the care and time spent establishing the event, no major issues emerged. A few minor changes were necessary; e.g., some dates were adjusted to better accommodate faculty and holiday schedules. It was also discovered that the four criteria listed in the evaluation rubric were not enough. The four criteria (clarity; intellectual and creative caliber; feasibility; and compatibility with space) did not meet the needs of the judges to be able to express whether they liked the work. Thus an additional criterion, to be known as aesthetic, will be incorporated into the next rubric. At the end of the competition, all five judges gave the experience very positive reviews and stated that they were glad to have served.

Students also responded positively to the endeavor. Interest from students in the competition was strong; in the competition's first year, seven submissions were received. The commission and selection process benefited students because they gained experience in proposal writing and competition. The dedication and reception for the winning art work also gave public recognition to the student as well as her art. The art competition, which engaged students both academically and experientially, also provided the Library an opportunity to make and strengthen connections across campus. Administration appreciated the effort to provide students with real-world experience and the venue for student work to be recognized. The Art Department valued it for the same reasons, and its expertise was called upon to create the Call for Proposals, judge the submissions, and provide oversight of the artwork's progression. The Library invested itself in the success of both the student and the program, and as a result stronger relationships with students, administration and the Art Department ensued.

References

- Beahan, M. J., Graveline, L.K., & Taxman, J. R. (2009). Uncommon partners: Facilitating creative collaborations in the arts across campus. *College & Undergraduate Libraries*, 16 (2/3), 194-210. doi: 10.1080/10691310903007918
- Beals, J. (2007). Student art in the library juried exhibition program. *Art Documentation* 26 (1), 56-58.
- Rettig, J. (2004). Art for everyone's sake. Virginia Libraries, 50 (3), 4-5.
- Lewis, D. W., & Schmidt, S. J. (2007). Art in the IUPUI University Library. *Indiana Libraries* 26 (2), 35-37.
- Waibel, G., Zorich, D. M., & Erway, R. (2009). Libraries, archives and museums: Catalysts along the collaboration continuum. *Art Libraries Journal* (34)2, 17-20.

Appendix A

Evaluation Rubric

Name:

	Poor 1	Fair 2	Very Good 3	Excellent 4	Score
Clarity of Proposal					
Intellectual and Creative Caliber					
Feasibility of Project					
Compatibility with Space					

Total Score:

Appendix B

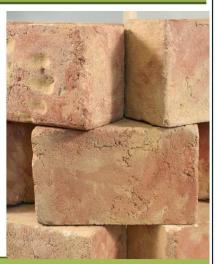
2011-2012 Student Art Competition Winner

2011-2012 Winner: Sara Swoboda

Project Title: Well of Infinite Knowledge







Appendix C

Art Competition Overview

John F. Reed Library's Art in the Library Student Art Competition

Overview:

Each Fall semester, Reed Library will host an annual *Art in the Library* student art competition open to all full-time, currently enrolled students at Fort Lewis College. Interested students will submit a proposal to a Selection Panel. The winning proposal will be selected by the Selection Panel and will receive a \$500.00 stipend to go toward the production of the art piece. The winning piece will be displayed in Reed Library for one year, beginning in the month of April of the academic year in which the piece was selected.

Procedure:

Interested students will submit a proposal to the Selection Panel no later than November 10th to be considered for that academic year. The Selection Panel will convene no later than November 19th to review all proposals. The top three submissions will be selected for in-person presentations before the Panel. Presentations will be scheduled on a date between November 29th and December 9th.

The winning proposal will be selected immediately after the last presentation is given. The winning proposal will be announced by December 10th and will receive one half of a \$500.00 stipend upon announcement. The successful student will be partnered with a member of the Art Department who will oversee their progress and provide advice as needed. The student will have until March 31st of that academic year to produce the piece of art and deliver it to Reed Library. The second half of the \$500.00 stipend will be provided upon delivery and installation of the art.

Reed Library will host a dedication of the art between April 1st and April 30th, in coordination with the artist. The Library will hold an official reception for the art during its annual Celebrating Art, Space and Technology reception in August of the following academic year.

Proposal Process:

See the document Call for Proposals

Student Contract:

A contract will be required from the winning applicant detailing the expectations of the Library and the loan agreement of the art.

See the document Student Contract

Sample Timeline:

October 1st – Selection Panel Chosen

October 1st – November 10th –Competition Advertised via Call for Proposals

November 10th - Proposals Due

November 15th -19th - Panel meets for first proposal review

THANKSGIVING BREAK

November 29th – December 9th – A date is scheduled within this time frame to hear the top three proposals. The winning proposal is selected immediately after the last proposal is heard.

December 10th - Winning Proposal Announced and one half of stipend provided March 31st - Art Complete - Art delivered and installed in the Library. Second half of stipend provided upon delivery and installation.

April 1st – April 30th - Dedication in coordination with artist

August 20th – August 30th – A date is selected for the reception in Reed Library

Composition of the Selection Panel:

The Selection Panel for the *Art in the Library* competition will be composed of 5 members, including two representatives from Reed Library, two representatives from the Art Department – one faculty member and one senior undergraduate student, and one at large member from Campus. The Chair of the Art Department and the Director of the Library will determine the composition of the Panel on an annual basis. The student selected to be on the Panel will receive an official invitation to be on the Panel by the Chair of the Panel.

A Library representative will convene and chair the panel. The Panel will meet an average of three times during each competition cycle.

Duration of Display and Acknowledgement of Winning Art:

The winning art will be displayed in Reed Library for one year, beginning in April of the academic year in which the proposal was approved. Included in the acknowledgement of the art piece will be: the name of the piece, the name of the artist, a photo of the artist, the major of the artist and the "Class of (ex. 2015)" description of the artist. The student who produced the art is responsible for both the delivery and pick up of the art to and from the Library. Reed Library will not be responsible for any art not picked up after its year period of display is complete. Students may contact the Library director for both delivery and pick up of art.

Advertisement:

A Call for Proposals will go out annually by October 1st. A link to the Call for Proposals will be provided on the Library home page, the Community Calendar of the Fort Lewis College home page.

Appendix D

Call for Proposals

REED LIBRARY'S CENTENNIAL - ART IN THE LIBRARY

STUDENT ART COMPETITION

CALL FOR PROPOSALS 2010-2011

The John F. Reed Library at Fort Lewis College is soliciting proposals for the 2010-2011 Art in the Library Student Art Competition. Proposals will be reviewed by the Art in the Library selection panel in November, 2010 and the winning proposal announced in December. \$500.00 will be awarded to the winning proposal to go toward the realization of the project. Completed projects are due in Reed Library by March 31", 2011 and will remain on display for one year.

All full-time, degree-seeking FLC students are eligible to apply. Applicants must be enrolled for a minimum of twelve credit hours both Fall and Winter 2010-2011.

Proposal Requirements and Format*:

Five copies of the proposal must be received in the Art Department office (101 Art Hall) by 4 pm, November 10^{th} , 2010:

- Contact Information: name of applicant, address, email, and phone
 Project description: up to \$00 words
- Visual project description: include a minimum of one image that describes your project (photo, drawing, model, digital image or anything else that visually describes your project)
- One page resume
 One page budget that includes estimated cost for all facets of project production and installation
- 6. Installation procedures or special display requirements for the given space
- * Proposal format must be followed exactly. Proposals that do not follow the format will not be

Selection Criteria:

The Selection Panel will evaluate proposals based on the following criteria:

- 1. Clarity of Proposal
- Intellectual and Creative Caliber
 Feasibility of Project
 Compatibility with Space

The top three submitters will be invited to give a five to ten minute presentation to the panel.

Space:

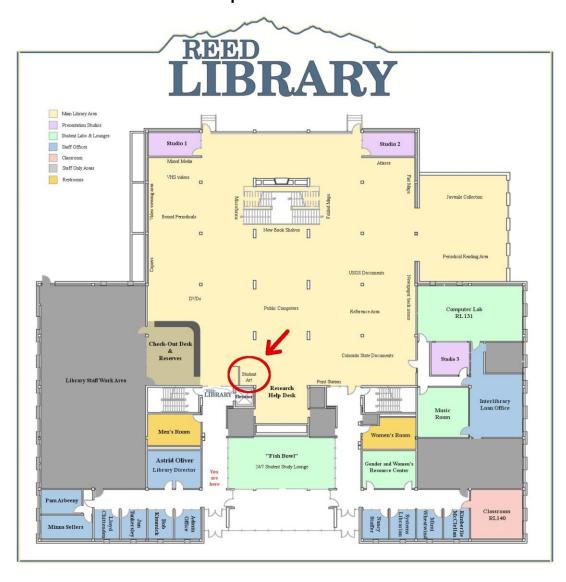
The finished artwork is to be installed in the library in a corner space with walls measuring 95.5" H x 80.75" W and 95.5" H x 95" W. Proposed projects may hang, stand, or be encased in this area. Maximum case size is 3' W x 2' D. See Library Floor Plan

November 10 th 2010	Proposals due	
November 29th - December 9th, 2010	Finalists are scheduled to present panel	
December 10th 2010	Winner announced	
March 31st 2011	Completed artwork delivered and installed in Reed Library	
April 1** - April 30** 2011	Dedication in coordination with artist	
Late August (date to be announced)	Reception in Reed Library	

\$250 will be awarded when the winner is announced and the remaining \$250 when the project has been satisfactorily completed and installed.

Appendix E

Competition Floor Plan



Appendix F

Student Contract

Reed Library	
Art in the Library	
Student Art Competition	
Fort Lewis College	
STUDENT CONTRACT AND ART ON LOAN A	GREEMENT
This Student Contract and Art on Loan Agreem	ent is made this day of
by and between	
	and the John F. Reed Library, Fort
Lewis College.	

The Parties agree to the following:

- 1. The student shall deliver the piece of art by 5:00p.m. on the agreed upon date of
- 2. The student shall deliver a piece of art that agrees with what was approved in their proposal.
- 3. The student shall receive \$250.00 of the \$500.00 stipend by January 10th of the year of the announcement of their proposal's selection by the Selection Panel.
- 4. Upon satisfactory delivery and installation of the item in the agreed upon location, the student shall receive the second portion (\$250.00) of the \$500.00 stipend.
- 5. The period of loan of the item shall be one year from the date of installation.
- Reed Library shall provide a case for the item, if required. Other special installation requirements shall be agreed upon by both parties during the proposal review process.
- 7. Reed Library will be responsible for arranging the installation of the item as per prior agreement.
- 8. Reed Library assumes no liability for damage of the item while in its care: the Library will give to objects borrowed the same care it gives comparable property of its own. Precautions will be taken to protect objects from vandalism, fire, theft, mishandling, dirt and insects.
- 9. Evidence of damage at the time of receipt or while in the Library's custody will be reported immediately to the lender.
- 10. The student who produced the art is responsible for both the delivery and pick up of the art to and from the Library. Reed Library will not be responsible for any art not picked up after its year period of display is complete. Students may contact the Library director for both delivery and pick up of art. Any costs for transporting or packing the artwork will be borne by the lender.
- 11. Visitors interested in purchasing the artwork will be provided the artist's contact information.
- 12. Both parties agree to the following timeline for construction, delivery, loan and pickup of the artwork:
 - By December 10th Winning Proposal Announced
 - By December 31st Contract is signed.
 - By January 10th One half (\$250.00) of the \$500.00 stipend is provided.

- Between December 10th and March 31st Production of art will occur. The winning student will be partnered with a member of the Fort Lewis College Art Faculty to oversee their progress and provide advice as needed.
- By April 30th or agreed upon date Art delivered and installed in the Library. Second half of stipend provided upon satisfactory delivery and installation.
- Between April 1st April 30th of the following year student will arrange pick up of the artwork in coordination with the Library director.
- 13. The student agrees to provide an artist's statement to be put on display with the artwork. Included in the acknowledgement of the art piece will be: the name of the piece, the name of the artist, the major of the artist and the "Class of (ex. 2015)" description of the artist.
- 14. The Library reserves the right to photograph or otherwise reproduce the artwork for educational, catalog and publicity purposes. It is understood that the object may be photographed by the general public.
- 15. Any notice or other communication required shall be in writing and shall be deemed to have been given if placed in the U. S. mail, registered or certified, postage prepaid, and addressed as follows:

Lender:

Address

Library: John F. Reed Library
Attn: Library Director
Fort Lewis College
1000 Rim Dr.
Durango, CO 81301

16. This Agreement will become effective as of the date of the last signature of the parties.
LENDER:
Name
Date

JOHN F. REED LIBRARY:

Date

Astrid Oliver, Interim Library Director

Astrid Oliver is the Director of the John F. Reed Library at Fort Lewis College.

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