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Crafting a Closure and the Art of Deconstruction: Lessons Learned from the Oregon College of Art and Craft Library's Final Days

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Abstract—After the disheartening news of a full closure of the Oregon College of Art and Craft in 2019, the librarian and partners had the unpleasant task of dismantling and distributing the library's unique collection. This article outlines that process in the context of other library closures and offers ideas for best practices and project management procedures for other libraries to consider if facing such a situation. The article is also a tribute to the unique collection and space that needed to be disassembled and how the collection lives on to make contributions at other institutions.

CRAFTING A CLOSURE

In early 2019, the Board of Trustees from the Oregon College of Art and Craft (Figure 1) announced that the school would terminate all degree programs at the conclusion of that academic term.[1] The decision followed unsuccessful efforts to restructure administrative activities, merge with other colleges, and resolve severe financial issues facing the school. The announcement was met with shock and sadness by the students, staff, and faculty of the small college. Nonetheless, there was much to do

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1. Oregon College of Art and Craft, "Announcement from Board of Trustees," February 2019, https://ocac.edu/closure/trustees-announcement.

Figure 1. Oregon College of Art and Craft logo.

in preparation for the impending closure: finding transfer opportunities for current students, dismantling the classrooms, studios, and galleries, and of course, decommissioning the library. The purpose of this article is not to dissect the reasons for the school's closure or investigate the current ecosystem of small private art colleges that makes it difficult for them to thrive, but rather to focus exclusively on the shuttering of the school's library.

Closing a library is a complex task that requires special attention to deciding personnel issues, disbanding technical services, resolving outstanding fines and lost items, communicating with vendors and patrons, ending contracts, and more. This article, however, focuses on best practices around disassembling an academic art library collection. The authors are former directors of library services at the Oregon College of Art and Craft (OCAC) from the years 2013–2018 and 2018–2019. The two librarians built a positive working relationship during this period. Dan Kelley, the most recent director, was tasked with the challenge of dismantling a collection in a community that was new to him, while Elsa Loftis, the former library director, was still connected to the OCAC community and collection, and both librarians desired to find homes for the dissolving collection. The two directors knew each other through local professional networks and had already corresponded about the library before the closure was announced.

LOST LIBRARIES

Library closures happen for a multitude of reasons and often have large and lasting impact on the communities they serve. Data about public library closures are tracked by several bodies, including the American Library Association, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, state libraries, statewide library professional associations, and other library advocacy groups.[2]

Academic library closures occur in a completely different environment than that of public libraries. They often involve the consolidation of specialized discipline-specific libraries into a general or central library collection.[3] This is a trend that continues in independent art and architecture libraries on Association of Research Libraries college campuses, which is explored by Stephen Patton and Kristina Keogh in their 2015 longitudinal study and environmental scan.[4] While these situations are keenly felt as a loss of a standalone library, often the collections are not lost entirely. This is not always the case, however, and collections may be disposed of due to duplication and space constraints of the larger library.

Other vulnerabilities for academic libraries involve inadequate support from a college or university's administration and what seem to be increasingly relaxed requirements for libraries' mandates from accreditation bodies. In her 2011 article, Megan Oakleaf outlines the Association of College and Research Libraries Value of Libraries initiative[5] and notes that libraries are often called upon to advocate for themselves as centrally relevant members of their institutions' communities.

RECENT LIBRARY CLOSURES

The absorption of the Corcoran College of Art + Design's library in 2014 by George Washington University's Gelman Library, described in a 2017 article by Shira Loev Eller, provides an example of the closure of another academic art library.[6] Both OCAC and the Corcoran College of Art + Design were members of the same consortium— the Association of Independent Colleges of Art and Design—and their collections were both supporting small, art-based colleges. In the case of Corcoran, a larger institution was able to absorb the entire library of the closing institution and initially maintained it as a standalone collection. This was not the case for OCAC.

The closure of OCAC and its library occurred soon after the closure of two other private colleges in the Portland, Oregon, metropolitan area: the Art Institute of

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2. Institute of Museum and Library Services, "Public Libraries Survey (PLS) Data and Reports," August 3, 2016, https://www.imls.gov/research-evaluation/data-collection/public-libraries-survey/explore-pls-data/pls-data; "State Library of Oregon: Public Library Statistics," https://www.oregon.gov/Library/libraries/Pages/Statistics.aspx; John Chrastka, "Library Closures and Defunding in 2017," January 24, 2017, http://everylibrary.org/library-closures-defunding-2017/.

3. Sara Holder and Amber Lannon, *Difficult Decisions: Closing and Merging Academic Libraries* (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2015).

4. Stephen A. Patton and Kristina M. Keogh, "The Branch Art Library in ARL Institutions: A Longitudinal Study and Environmental Scan," *Art Documentation* 34, no. 2 (Fall 2015): 249–66.

5. Megan Oakleaf, "What's the Value of an Academic Library? The Development of the ACRL Value of Academic Libraries Comprehensive Research Review and Report," *Australian Academic & Research Libraries* 42, no. 1 (2011): 1–13.

6. Shira Loev Eller, "A New Chapter for the Corcoran Library: Transforming an Art School Library into a University Art and Design Collection," *Art Documentation* 36, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 137–48.

Portland (closed winter 2018) and Marylhurst College (closed after summer 2018). It was remarkable that three institutions of higher education closed over such a short time period in the same city. The Museum of Contemporary Craft, which also housed a small library collection, closed two years earlier, further highlighting the vulnerability of small arts organizations.[7] The nearly concurrent dissolution of several library collections in a relatively small geographic radius increased the difficulty faced by OCAC's library director in finding homes for the many volumes that required relocation. Other area libraries had space constraints and in some cases had already taken on some of the collections from the two college libraries that had closed just prior to OCAC's dissolution. In particular, the Art Institute of Portland's print book collection overlapped in several areas with the content of OCAC's collection, as both schools offered programs in photography, drawing, painting, and a broader study of contemporary art. Marylhurst also offered a BA in Art and a BFA degree, and therefore had library material to support programs similar to OCAC in some disciplines.

THE CRAFT COLLECTION

Despite some overlap with arts collections in other closing libraries, OCAC's collections were unique because of the curriculum's attention to highly specialized craft disciplines, such as book arts, woodworking, ceramics, metalworking, and fiber arts. While many arts programs are relatively common locally, the OCAC library director had neither the time nor resources to attempt to relocate its more specialized craft literature to appropriate libraries outside the region. The OCAC library also contained unique pamphlets, an ephemera collection, artists' books, rare books, student thesis papers, and images.

The collection of student senior thesis papers was an important part of the collection because it documented the work of past students and served as a model for the students who were beginning their thesis work. The preservation of the theses was of vital importance to maintaining the legacy of the college. The library cataloged and housed approximately 600 theses completed between 1991 and 2019—twenty-eight years of scholarship dedicated to the creation of art and craft from a vibrant and unique community.

Several faculty members had been at the college for two decades or more and were heavily involved with the development of the collection. With a modest materials budget, the library often gratefully accepted donated books from the faculty and other community members. However, because of the affection for the library materials felt by many of the faculty, it was often a struggle to deaccession items to make room for new acquisitions, and it proved difficult to implement a strategic collection development strategy. This led to an eclectic collection that was a direct reflection of the community it served (Figure 2).

The limited space in the library did not allow for much growth, and a large deselection project was being planned for the summer of 2019. However, once the

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7. Sarah Archer et al., "Why the Closing of the Museum of Contemporary Craft Is a Major Loss," *Hyperallergic*, February 8, 2016, https://hyperallergic.com/274239/why-the-closing-of-the-museum-of-contemporary-craft-is-a-major-loss/.
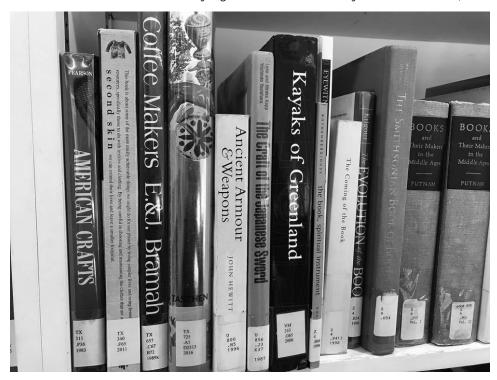
Figure 2. A section of the OCAC library's shelf. Image by Elsa Loftis. Please see the online edition of *Art Documentation* for a color version of this image.

college announced the closure, the assets of the institution were frozen, and the librarian was prohibited from allowing any library material to leave the campus. Disposing of assets required a series of agreements approved by the OCAC legal team, the receiving institutions, and the Office of the Attorney General of Oregon. In retrospect, it would have been easier if the collection had been thoroughly weeded before the announcement of the closure.

PRIORITIZING PARTNERSHIPS

In the face of closure, the first priority was to help students finish their studies as seamlessly as possible. This created the need for strategic thinking for how and when to rehouse material still needed by students who were about to graduate or change institutions. Reaching out to the local library community was crucial, whether for the purpose of rallying support to save the library, to find future homes for the collection, or simply to get emotional support about the distressing work of the closure project.

The OCAC library was a member of two larger support networks. It was a special library member of the Washington County Cooperative Library Services (WCCLS), a cooperative of eighteen library locations, of which all but two were public. Because OCAC was not a tax-supported entity, the library paid a modest annual membership fee that gave it access to a robust shared integrated library system, courier service, other central support, RFID technology, security gates, and interlibrary loan. Participation in

the local consortium enabled OCAC to share its specialized collection with the greater local community and for OCAC patrons to obtain materials from large public and academic libraries.

OCAC was also a member of the Association of Independent Colleges of Art and Design (AICAD), a consortium of forty schools in the United States and Canada. One of its members—the Pacific Northwest College of Art (PNCA)—is also located in Portland. In fact, during OCAC's financial hardships, a merger of the two colleges was proposed and entertained by both schools' boards of trustees. Such a solution did not come to fruition, but the two colleges have a history of collaboration, even sharing an MFA program: the MFA-ACD, a Master of Fine Arts in Art, Craft and Design. Therefore, it was a fairly natural move for many OCAC students to transfer to PNCA.

These two partnerships, WCCLS and AICAD/PNCA, played supporting roles to the OCAC library. The AICAD membership was of great benefit to the former library director, who attended directors' meetings regularly, participated in listserv conversations, and had the opportunity to be mentored by other library directors in the group. The library director serving at the time of OCAC's closure appreciated the potential role of AICAD but did not have sufficient time or opportunity to connect to that community during the tumultuous last year of the college. Although the AICAD libraries may have been interested in adopting volumes and assisting OCAC with the closure, the tight timeframe of the closure, the physical distance, and the lack of professional connection with the directors meant that collaboration was not practical. Ultimately, it was the partnership with WCCLS that assisted the library in very tangible ways.

Although help with the OCAC library closure came from several places and people, it was a project team created at WCCLS that did the strategic work of realizing the mechanics of the closure. The team, composed of OCAC and WCCLS employees, was created to contribute the expertise needed to decommission the library. It initially included the director of the OCAC library and, from WCCLS, the library project coordinator, the interlibrary loan coordinator, the ILS librarian, and the webmaster. Ten other WCCLS staff, called "friends of the team," had a part in the project but did not participate in regular status meetings. Each person had a vital role to play in both the planning of the closure and its execution. An administrative support person from OCAC later was added to the group to provide a second point of communication with the OCAC dean and to help the library director with the workload. Although the OCAC administrative support person was not involved in the initial stages of the project and was not familiar with the complexities of the library, her involvement in the project would prove to be immensely valuable because of her knowledge of local arts institutions and her dedication to placing the collections in places they would be appreciated and used.

FINDING HOMES FOR THE COLLECTIONS

A fundamental element of the closure project was to determine which parts of the collection were most important and to identify which institutions would be most likely to use and appreciate them. It was the conclusion of both librarians that the most valuable parts were the student thesis papers, rare books, and artists' books. In addition,

expensive or out-of-print material would be welcomed by institutions with limited budgets, such as small libraries, museums, and arts education institutions. The first step in finding new homes for the material was to create title lists and identify institutions that might be interested in accepting parts of the collection. There was no single entity identified that could acquire the collection in its entirety.

The diversity of the institutions that ultimately took materials from the OCAC library was very striking.[8] To be systematic, the librarian offered title lists to institutions one at a time. Time was short, and selections had to be made quickly in order to rehouse all materials. PNCA was given the first look at the library's inventory and was offered the opportunity to make selections. Not only was PNCA considered a sister institution to OCAC, but it was also a logical move for OCAC students who had yet to complete their studies and were transferring to PNCA to finish their programs. OCAC faculty hand-selected monographs from the library that they wished to see brought over to the PNCA library, whose staff then checked for duplication and approved what came over to support the curriculum of the transfer students. The second library was Portland State University, where the former OCAC library director had become the acquisitions librarian and supported the university's school of art and design. Subsequent institutions were identified based on their geographic proximity—due to shipping cost constraints and the networks between local librarians—and programmatic representation. Reed College, for example, features academic concentrations that complemented some of OCAC's collections. Following is a discussion of the collections by material type and the approach to handling their transfer.

STUDENT THESIS PAPERS
A principal concern was the legacy of the college in the form of the thesis work. The OCAC students and faculty feared that the unique body of work would not be preserved. The decision was made that PNCA would take the papers because of the close fit with their curriculum. In addition, many OCAC students would be transferring there and would have ready access to them for research and study. It was also arranged with Artstor that the corresponding thesis images on the Shared Shelf platform would be transferred to the main Artstor digital library. In that way, when OCAC's subscription lapsed, the images would stay available and not be suppressed due to an inactive subscription account.

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8. List of recipients of OCAC Library materials: Banks Public Library, Friends of the Banks Public Library, Beaverton City Library, Catlin Gabel School, Clackamas Community College, Cedar Mill Library, Cornelius Public Library, Forest Grove City Library, Garden Home Community Library, Hillsboro Public Library Brookwood, The Friends of the Hillsboro Public Library, King School Museum of Contemporary Art, Mount Hood Community College, Portland Art Museum, Portland Community College, Analog Photo Collective: PDX Darkroom, Pacific Northwest College of Art, Portland State University, Reed College, St. Mary's Academy, Tigard Public Library, Friends of the Tigard Library, Tuality Healthcare Library, Warren Wilson College, West Slope Community Library, Friends of the West Slope Library, Yucca Valley Material Lab, and Crow's Shadow Institute of the Arts.

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS: RARE BOOKS, ARTISTS' BOOKS, CALLIGRAPHY COLLECTION, PAMPHLETS, AND EPHEMERA

OCAC library held a small but unique collection of rare books and artists' books that did not fit within the scope of most libraries' collections. Fortunately, some local institutions were well positioned to provide a home for these collections. The library at the Portland Art Museum accepted the entire pamphlet and ephemera collections and about one hundred of the rare and artists' books.

The calligraphy monographic collection was an eclectic mix of instructional and historically significant works by prominent calligraphers. There were also back issues of a local journal sponsored by the Portland Society for Calligraphy that was founded by noted calligrapher Lloyd Reynolds and a group of his students. The OCAC librarian was contacted by the president of the society who expressed concern about the fate of the calligraphic materials collection that the society had donated to OCAC years ago. This collection included not only monographs, but broadsheets and art works that were no longer in the library's purview. There was also a unique slide collection compiled and used for teaching by well-known calligrapher Dick Beasley. The librarian sought out the slides in question, which were in deep storage, and discovered not only the calligraphy collection but also uncataloged calligraphic artworks in the permanent collection of the college. Most of the calligraphy collection was transferred to Reed College.

PRINT JOURNALS

The journal collection was a mix of image-rich works and dense text-heavy periodicals. A few of the titles were taken by arts institutions with a particular focus. For example, the Yucca Valley Material Lab accepted the entire run of *Metalsmith* so students could trace the evolution of that craft over time. Some of the public libraries adopted the more practical and design periodicals such as *Fine Woodworking* and *Dwell*. The glossy and pictorial periodicals were claimed by arts organizations that planned to use them for collage art projects.

35MM SLIDE COLLECTION

The OCAC library had a legacy collection of approximately 40,000 35mm slides. When the library's space was reorganized, the collection was put into storage with the hope that the library would one day digitize some of the content for future use. By then, the faculty had adjusted to using Artstor images or their own images for their lectures, so the demand for the material faded away. Only a fraction of the slide collection was seen as valuable when the library was dissolved. Some of the other slides in the collection were of faculty work, which were indeed digitized and stored on the Artstor Shared Shelf platform. The other slides were discarded.

GENERAL INTEREST MONOGRAPHS

Some materials from the collection were intended for a general interest audience to learn certain craft techniques. There were a large number of instructional books that offered advice, patterns, and anecdotes in various craft disciplines, such as

needlepoint, knitting, and welding. This type of material was of great interest to public library patrons. A list of titles that were often requested by other WCCLS libraries was created and distributed to the selectors at those institutions. Those staff members used the list to request titles and also visited the library to make selections. Donating titles to other WCCLS libraries was simpler than transferring them to other institutions because the item and bibliographic records could be maintained, as could the barcodes and security tags. In addition, the WCCLS courier made it easy to transport the monographs to the other consortial libraries. In the end, the WCCLS libraries added a total of 525 OCAC titles to their collections, which was less than the OCAC librarian had expected as there were approximately 11,000 items to distribute. Many of the remaining general interest monographs were taken by various public library Friends groups and non-academic arts institutions.

ACADEMIC ART AND CRAFT MONOGRAPHS

Aside from general interest crafting books, there were many monographs better suited to an academic audience. These included exhibition catalogs, retrospectives, histories, theoretical work, and thematically driven collections, such as the *Documents of Contemporary Art* series and other university press material. These titles appealed to academic and college libraries, including Portland State University, Mount Hood Community College, and PNCA. The libraries acquired nearly 2,500 monographs from the collection. Many libraries and art institutions were very interested in using the OCAC titles to increase the diversity of their collections by adding work and perspectives of historically marginalized voices and social movements. At Portland State University, the library gathered material to support its School of Art + Design by increasing holdings related to artists from underrepresented groups. Scholarly works about artists of color and of LGBTQ communities were favored for selection, as were books dealing with social justice themes in the art world.

INSTITUTIONAL RECORDS

Although the library did not house a complete collection of institutional records for the school, it did contain some accreditation reports, campus master plans, committee minutes, feasibility studies, and an incomplete collection of OCAC exhibition catalogs. Because there was no institutional archivist and these types of documents were scattered all over campus, it was a struggle to organize these records during the chaotic last few months of the college.

Nevertheless, the librarian, along with other faculty and staff, valued the preservation of the institutional legacy and were determined to preserve the important records. The librarian discovered that the Oregon Historical Society (OHS) was already the repository for older institutional records for the college. After reviewing the finding aids and visiting the archives with the former librarian and other interested parties, the library director was able to convince the OCAC administration that the records were valuable, and efforts should be made to preserve them. The relationship he forged with OHS helped preserve the legacy of the college.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The project team provided leadership and made a plan to close the library and distribute its collections. The experienced project manager from WCCLS understood the consortial infrastructure and the skill sets of the other WCCLS employees, and had strong communication skills and a flexible approach. The stated goals of the project were to support OCAC students and the OCAC library director through the last semester and to smoothly transition OCAC out of the WCCLS cooperative. The responsible distribution of the collections was not a stated goal, but it was universally agreed upon and a priority of the library director. The project was entitled "OCAC Epilogue."

It was immediately clear that the decommissioning project needed to be managed thoughtfully and deliberately to ensure its success.[9] There were multiple reasons why the project team chose to use Scrum, an agile project management framework. WCCLS had previously used Scrum to implement Bibliocore, and the WCCLS library project coordinator was a certified and trained Scrummaster. WCCLS leadership also wanted more of their staff to gain experience with the platform for future projects. The team chose to mitigate the risk of the project failing if the director of the library left his position before OCAC closed or the project was completed. The framework promoted constant communication and transparency, and it avoided long email exchanges and traditional "hand-off" project management. This project management process was especially undesirable in this particular case because there was concern that not all of the OCAC employees involved in project would remain fully engaged.

The team generally met daily for fifteen minutes and weekly for an hour, using remote meeting software. A Trello board was employed as an online platform and helped track group members' tasks and projects. The team needed to be able to move quickly once the library closed and to work simultaneously and avoid a sequential project method. This method also prevented misunderstandings and rework, which was especially important for a team split across multiple locations and organizations. Perhaps most importantly, the project method was adaptable, and the team knew that the scope of the project, the deadlines, and the requirements would evolve during the project; reprioritizing work was easy to do and track.

Good communication between the project manager and the library director was vital. Because the library needed to offer all services and collections to support the students until the end of the semester, at first the project team was limited mostly to planning. Different aspects of the closure project occurred at different times out of necessity. Below is an outline of how each area was handled by the team.

PATRONS

Communication with patrons about the impact of the closure of the library was essential. The OCAC community required assurance that library services and collections

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9. Jenn Anne Horwath, "How Do We Manage? Project Management in Libraries: An Investigation," *Partnership: The Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research* 7, no. 1 (January 2012): 1–34, https://doi.org/10.21083/partnership.v7i1.1802.

would be available to them until the end of the semester. Local WCCLS patrons without OCAC affiliation needed to know about how the closure of the "local branch of WCCLS" would affect their ability to pick up and drop off books. The wider community had to be made aware that the unique collections at OCAC would no longer be available.

Effective communication between the library and these different patron groups was needed throughout the months leading to the closure. The OCAC librarian created posters (Figure 3), an FAQ webpage and an email explaining when all items would be due, the coming cessation of interlibrary loan services, the automatic transfer of patron's home branch from OCAC to the closest member library, and how fines would be levied for unreturned books. Because the OCAC community was heavily dependent on consortial and interlibrary loan, it was important to minimize loss of materials. The project team prioritized the needs of the OCAC patrons and aligned its actions with the OCAC academic calendar. Items were available only for pick-up at OCAC three weeks before the end of the term, and on the last day of classes they were made unavailable. All items were due the last day of final examinations. OCAC records were permanently suppressed from the shared catalog a few days following. Late notices and then billing notices were accelerated and went out in rapid succession. All but a handful of books were returned, much to the relief of the library director.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The fact that the library shared an integrated library system, Polaris, with other member libraries in WCCLS meant that the MARC bibliographic records of the items deaccessioned from the OCAC library were removed from the system during their regular deletion period for records with no holdings attached. Locally created bibliographic records and item records for the student thesis papers were transferred to PNCA, as was the metadata from the database that supports the thesis papers. The Portland Art Museum acquired the pamphlet collection, and WCCLS catalogers transferred the records along with the physical items. All other institutions needed to catalog their materials on their own. The ephemera collection did not have MARC records associated with them but were discoverable by the use of a locally created finding aid.

Security gates, bookdrops, WCCLS promotional materials, and hardware associated with WCCLS's network system were returned to WCCLS for reuse. The OCAC IT department handled the dispersion of the other equipment, aside from the slide scanner and the large format Epson scanner, which were transferred to the Portland Art Museum's library.

SELECTION

Libraries and other nonprofits were able to select items from the OCAC collection in a variety of ways. A record set of the entire collection was created and distributed to interested institutions one at a time so that multiple institutions would not claim the same titles. As previously stated, PNCA was given first choice of materials since many OCAC students would be transferring there. The OCAC librarian, in consultation

Figure 3. Patron communication flier. Image by Sol Lee, 2019. Please see the online edition of *Art Documentation* for a color version of this image.

with OCAC administration, prioritized local institutions that were open to the public and had robust library systems in place to enhance sharing. Invitations were sent to the selectors from the institutions that chose a time slot to physically review and select materials. The physical selection process was important because the record set did not enable selectors to evaluate the titles. Library Friends groups proved invaluable in taking titles that were not chosen for adoption by other nonprofit organizations.

To comply with legal guidelines, a record set of adopted material was created for each institution, signed by both parties, then submitted for approval by the Oregon Attorney General. The record set was created by an assembly line of OCAC and WCCLS employees and volunteers. For items not going to other WCCLS libraries, the RFID tags were disabled, and the item records were deleted.

PHYSICAL TRANSFER

Once the semester had concluded and it was finally time to distribute the materials to other libraries and empty the physical space, the team met for a "boxing" party and separated the collection by recipient (Figure 4). As outlined above, many different stakeholders received elements of the collection, but they were located near the college, and the WCCLS courier was able to distribute many of the print materials to the receiving institutions. For those that were not on the courier's route, items were either picked up or delivered by the librarian and OCAC staff.

CLOSURE

While the library was still in working order and in possession of all its assets, the library director hosted a "Library Wake" that coincided with the final student art exhibition at the college's Hoffman Gallery. It was a well-attended event, complete with libations and live music. Former library directors attended, as well as members of the project team, members of the college's staff and administration, and of course, faculty and students. It was an opportunity for the community to come together to grieve the loss of the library, and the larger institution, and acknowledge the hard work of library dissolution.[10]

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE OCAC CLOSURE PROJECT

After the WCCLS courier removed the last boxes of books from the library space, the computers were unplugged, and the equipment was moved out, the library became simply an empty building. The project team met for a final time at the WCCLS administrative offices and discussed a shared document about what had worked and what could be improved in the process.

Some of the key takeaways were evaluations of the project software applications utilized by the team, including Trello, GoToMeeting, and use of Google Drive. There was also a discussion of best practices for online meetings. Beyond the use of software

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10. April Baer, "Saying Goodbye to the Oregon College of Art and Craft," *Oregon Public Broadcasting*, May 22, 2019, https://www.opb.org/radio/programs/state-of-wonder/article/oregon-college-art-craft-closes-remembering/.

Figure 4. A portion of the empty library after material transfer. Image by Elsa Loftis. Please see the online edition of *Art Documentation* for a color version of this image.

tools to manage the project, the team acknowledged the value of other people in one's contact pool, including former library directors and others within the network to get a sense of other libraries, art societies, and nonprofit institutions that could inherit the library material. These organizations all have fundamentally different selection criteria, and reaching out to them was essential to the success of the project.

Another recommendation that could have been implemented was to examine the holds queue for the collection, and in doing so, determine where certain items could go, or have gone in the past via interlibrary loan. Group members recognized the obvious fact that art books are very heavy. It would have been useful to have had a box scale at the library during the packing process to keep the boxes at an acceptable weight for loading and delivery. Another challenge was that the wireless capability at the OCAC library was not ideal, and so the book processing with portable devices might have been improved if there had been better coverage.

The final takeaway was the desire for one thing that no one could possibly provide: more time. In what felt like a scramble to take apart a library that had been built over many decades, the team wished for a greater amount of time and labor in order to close the institution with intention and care. The closure of OCAC was done in haste, and there was a lack of internal staff to distribute the difficult work of the project. In

this, the OCAC library was fortunate to rely on the work and dedication of the project team at WCCLS, who graciously gave their time and support. The group estimated that it would have liked a year and a half to do the work, rather than the five months it was given.

Any library facing a similar situation would benefit from consulting or hiring an experienced project manager. Creating a dedicated team was essential to getting materials to the right places and disseminating pertinent information to the community affected by the closure. Intentional project management is invaluable due in part to instability in staffing, who will of necessity look for other jobs and sometimes leave before the official closure. The short-term costs to hire or fund a project manager or team will be worth the investment if the collection and library is to be decommissioned successfully.[11]

Often, an academic library is not responsible for hosting official institutional records. However, accreditation studies, the holdings of exhibition catalogs from gallery shows on campus, thesis exhibition catalogs for shows off campus, records of the art collections or faculty work could have been more consistently collected throughout the life of the college at the library. This would have made for a more seamless and complete transfer of that kind of documentation to the Oregon Historical Society for the preservation of the college's history. The historical legacy of the college should be preserved for the role it played in craft education in the Pacific Northwest for more than a century.

EPILOGUE FOR AN ART LIBRARY

Libraries and their collections are living things. They grow with time, with their communities, their scope and range evolve, their students graduate, their caretakers move on, and sometimes they reach a finality—a kind of death. The community has indeed lost something that is difficult to measure by collection counts and circulation statistics. Such is true when any library must close, but it was difficult to anticipate the emotional toll that the dissolution would take. Members of the faculty literally built and painted the shelving in the stacks, students painted murals on the sides of the building, and much of its collection was hand-selected or donated by instructors and community members. The library collection was small and specialized, much the same as the college it served. Students illustrated book jackets for many of its volumes, and anywhere from 5 to 10 percent of the student body was at one time employed by the library as Work-Study students. People from the neighborhood used the library to pick up their holds from the public library and often got sidetracked looking at the featured art periodicals. The library hosted art shows, book discussions, knitting circles, and provided free coffee. It was a place that the former librarian always described to students as "an extension of your studio," meaning that it was

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11. Marc Lappe and Konrad Spang, "Investments in Project Management Are Profitable: A Case Study-Based Analysis of the Relationship between the Costs and Benefits of Project Management," *International Journal of Project Management* 32, no. 4 (2014): 603–12.

meant to be a refuge for thought but also a place to be creative. It required strength of leadership to make this difficult transition effectively and to safeguard what could be salvaged of the library and college's legacy—even if it must be different librarians who steward it in the future. Due to effective partnerships and the leadership that was shown, although the collection had to be dissolved and absorbed into others, elements of it will continue to support the study and practice of art and craft.