THE WEIR CONNECTION:
LIAISON WORK, STUDENT MENTORSHIP, DIGITIZATION PROJECT, COLLECTION ASSESSMENT, AND “ART IN THE LIBRARY” EXHIBITION

The exhibition The Weir Family, 1820-1920: Expanding the Traditions of American Art, hosted during 2011-2012 at the BYU Museum of Art in Provo, UT was the springboard for a series of subsequent related projects at the BYU Harold B. Lee Library. This connection began with liaison work between the library and the museum, and ended with an “Art in the Library” exhibition of photographs of the Weir studio by a prominent visiting artist. This series of activities and projects that unfolded in association with the initial museum exhibition presented a functional model for future initiatives in the library, in support of upcoming museum programs. This poster will illustrate the fortunate sequence of events in the process.

1. LIAISON WORK: ART LIBRARIAN, MUSEUM CURATOR, AND STUDENT RESEARCH ASSISTANT

The art librarian worked with the museum curator and research student assistant in providing support and training in the preliminary research for the accompanying exhibition catalog. The Weir Family, 1820-1920, ed. by Marsha Wardle with essays by Hal Foster, Ramsey, Bringham Young University Museum of Art. University Press of New England, 2011. 195 p. Resources were identified, and materials not held by the Lee Library were ordered through Interlibrary Loan Services.

2. STUDENT MENTORSHIP AND LIBRARY-SPONSORED RESEARCH GRANT APPLICATION

As the research process developed, the art librarian also oversaw an application for the research assistant, a graduate student in Art History, for a library-funded grant to pursue additional investigation of the subject beyond the Lee Library Special Collections. BYU is only one of four institutions with significant holdings about the Weir Family. The student worked on reviewing letters, journal entries, and manuscripts, compiling the content for the Weir Family genealogy section in the upcoming exhibition catalog. The grant allowed her to travel to visit the Manuscripts and Archives at Yale University.

3. DIGITIZATION PROJECT IN SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Close examination of the materials related to the Weir family in Special Collections revealed correspondence, diaries, scrapbooks, manuscripts, speeches, artwork, clippings, and other published material dating from 1765 to 1929. This material had not yet been digitized. The art librarian brought together Special Collections curators, Library Digital Projects Manager, Museum Curator, and Student Research Assistant, coordinating the digitization of these sources, in order to make them available concurrently with the Museum of Art’s exhibition. The digitized project later became the “Weir Family Papers & Photographs” at http://lib.byu.edu/Digital/warehouse available through the library homepage.

4. COLLECTION ASSESSMENT

A collection assessment of materials by and about members of the Weir family and American impressionism in general was planned. Materials not held by the Lee Library were identified for acquisition, including surveys, monographs, and exhibition catalogs. This assessment project will strengthen the general collection in these areas, benefiting future research by students, faculty, and museum visitors.

5. “ART IN THE LIBRARY” EXHIBITION PROGRAM

The Lee Library has had a robust “Art in the Library” program for 13 years, with 4 active exhibition venues. Its mission is to support creative projects by visual and media arts students, and to lure visiting artists to foster creativity in the library. In order to extend the Museum of Art’s “Weir” experience on campus, the Lee Library hosted an exhibition of photographs by New York visiting artist Damiani. Xerography was commissioned by Weir Farm National Historic Site, Connecticut, to photograph the interior of the Weir Farm studio. His works were on exhibit at the BYU Lee Library for 3 months, with plans for an artist visit, gallery talk, BYU radio interview, and individual meetings with visual arts students. After the exhibition, the Lee Library acquired 4 of the photographs displayed for the permanent collection.

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The Weir Family, 1820-1920: Expanding the Traditions of American Art
Nov. 18, 2011 - May 19, 2012

First major exhibition of works by Robert Walter Weir, John Ferguson Weir, and Julian Alden Weir showcasing significant pieces from the BYU museum and private collections across the country. The exhibition explains how the transatlantic encounters of the Weir family of artists helped to shape American art for nearly a century.

more at http://meettheweirs.com

TAKEAWAY

CHECKLIST FOR LIBRARY PROJECTS RELATED TO FUTURE MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS ON CAMPUS

- Liaison work with museum curators and student research assistants
- Membership of student and endorsement of any relevant grants to strengthen the research process
- Digitization of any related materials located in the Archives of Special Collections, or under public domain
- Collection assessment project in relevant subject areas, with the intent to strengthen the library collection in those areas
- “Art in the Library” exhibition of related content with art work by students, faculty, or visiting artists

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