Whether one’s academic background is in studio art or art history, the art librarian is generally considered the all-around “art expert” in the academic library. This seldom poses a problem when performing routine duties such as collection development, reference, or instruction, but when faced with the unexpected task of selecting and acquiring actual works of art for a library, the librarian may feel as if they have strayed out of his or her comfort zone. This poster focuses on my experience as the chair of a newly created art committee in a large academic library.

After years of looking at blank walls, the Michigan State University Libraries administration began to make efforts to acquire art for the main library building. Two factors contributing to the influx of artwork were an annual student art competition and an increase in potential donations of artwork, cultivated by the Libraries’ development officer. Needing advice on whether or not to accept donations, where to place recently acquired artwork, and a variety of related issues, the director of the Libraries formed an art committee. Members were appointed, with the art librarian being selected to chair the committee. Art acquired through the annual art competition requires little attention on the part of the committee, aside from choosing the location where the winning pieces will be mounted, but potential donations of art are more complicated.

My poster will cover the issues that the committee was asked to consider when evaluating a potential donation of art, including the development of a policy to guide the committee through the process. Additional issues of preservation/conservation of the art, costs associated with the acquisition of new pieces, and the development of a website to showcase the Libraries’ collection will be presented, all with an aim to assist other art librarians who might find themselves in a similar situation.